QUESTION EVERYTHING

Della Wren

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To loving your life and doing things on your own terms.
It's good to finally be free enough to be who I am and love what I do.

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Disclaimer

This book is intended to offer support to those on their own spiritual healing journey. The ideas, methods, and beliefs presented in this book are my own and come from my own life experience and spiritual beliefs. I am not a therapist or counselor, nor do I pretend to be one. It is important that you take responsibility for your own mental health. If at anytime you need professional help, please seek it out. This book is not intended to replace the advice of a trained mental health professional.

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Introduction

When I write, I often give myself my own clarity and writing books is no exception to that. I leave those discoveries intact when I write because I feel they are an important part of the journey of creating the book. They are valid and valuable to those that read the book who may be working through similar things themselves. My own self-discovery is an important part of the creation process and it's one that I don't take for granted. I enjoy the process of learning about myself through writing. My hope is that you enjoy going on that journey with me every time you read something I write.

Honestly, I write books for myself. I write blogs for myself. Everything I write is for me. What I attempt to do by sharing publicly is offer some of the clarity I get from my writing back to you. It's like a giant public journal for me. What sharing publicly does is it forces me to cut out the noise. It forces me to see what's happening very clearly so that I'm not sharing the drama or the play-by-play. I have to look for the bigger purpose behind everything that I experience in my life and then share that with you. That's often not an easy task because the clarity can be quite hidden and can change 5-minutes after I write something down.

This book is a collection of beliefs or ideas that I've come across in my journey. It's a collection of the clarity I've been given over the years. I've done my best to explain what each idea is and how it shows up in daily life. I've also tried to explain how I got there without giving you the gory details so that you can see the work that I've done to get to where I am.

I don't and have never pretended to know everything but I try my best to share what I learn as a way of helping others who may find themselves coming to similar conclusions. They aren't necessarily the easiest conclusions to come to and often they require us to let go of a lot of our old ways of being because they are so different from anything we've been taught.

When I started this book it was my attempt to clarify what I had learned. The original goal was to give you a set of ideas that, if you took them on, would free you from the pain in your life, allow you to move forward on your own terms, and find the happiness you're looking for. As I've written more and more of this book, it's become just a set of ideas that I've used to gain clarity about myself. The goal didn't necessarily change because ultimately I share with the hope that it will help

you, but the primary function of the book did change. Instead of being solely to help you it became about helping me to understand me.

What have I learned through writing this? I learned more about how I got to where I am. I had to be really honest with myself about what I'm doing and why. There are many revelations all throughout this book, many I shared on social media and in blogs when they happened. This book is me living my life in real-time, learning as I go, sharing what I gather up along the way, and making the whole thing make sense for you. Every single topic is an aspect of the journey I've been on. They aren't in chronological order. It's not a run down of my life. I can't even really tell you what the order is. It's not really order of importance. It's just how they came about. It's how the ideas showed up. That's the only order there is to it.

Lots of people write books to share their stories. They relive a lot of the drama and play-by-play, change names to protect people, and then talk about all the crazy that happened. I write books not to share the crazy, but to share my truth. The crazy isn't true. It's just a show to distract you from what's really happening. I try my best to filter out the show so you can see what's under all that stuff. If the people that wrote the books about the crazy could filter it all out, they'd see a whole different reality under there that has nothing to do with what they wrote about.

Don't get me wrong, everybody loves a good tell-all book. We're all curious about what's going on behind the scenes of all these people we see in the news and on television. What's life really like for those people? But the drama isn't true. It's just a distraction from the pain that most of them never really acknowledge or talk about. The only time they do is when they find themselves hitting their own version of bottom. Often they disappear at that point. They fade out of the spotlight because the pain is overwhelming and not nearly as exciting as the drama they had been sharing. A tell-all book is a heck of a lot more fun to write and read than a book about handling the pain ever will be. It's just that the book about handling the pain is what the world needs right now because there is so much pain to handle.

A question came to me the other day. What if we talked about how to be happy instead of talking about how to heal the pain? What if we shifted the focus a little bit? Instead of teaching people how to manage pain, what if we taught people how to be happy by letting go of what makes them unhappy? Can you let go of the unhappiness if the goal is simply to be happier? Does that make the process easier? What if you don't focus on the letting go part? What if you focus on where you're going instead?

We get told to focus on the big vision, don't we? What does that actually mean? It means you don't focus on the next thing you have to get rid of. You don't focus on the next cycle you need to break or the next problem that you might need to solve. You focus on doing the things that move you closer to where you want to go, whatever that looks like. For most of us the problem isn't doing the things, the problem is the focus on the problems. The problem is the focus on what other people think, what might happen next, what might go wrong, how we might fail, and what happens if. It's the focus on all those things that keeps us stuck. It lets the brain have a field day making up all kinds of stuff that almost never happens.

But because we don't pay attention to our thoughts and we let the mind run wild, we end up terrified and hiding in the corner. We don't get anywhere.

My work on myself has taught me a lot of things, but one of the biggest things it taught me was where to focus and what to pay attention to. The shift in my focus away from all the chaos meant that I could feel better more of the time. By feeling better I was able to gain more clarity around myself and what was going on. I was able to see better what was mine and what wasn't. I was able to make better choices, release fear and worry, and get out of my head. Changing the focus gave my brain less to make up. It didn't have as much to say because I wasn't constantly letting problems float around in my mind. Focus made way for clarity. Clarity made way for truth. Truth made way for happiness. Now I can gain clarity, keep my focus, and be happy all at the same time. Who knew that was possible?

I set out to give you a path of healing in this book. What I ended up giving you was stepping stones that you can put in any order you need to so that you can get to your dreams in your own way. It's like carpet tiles for healing. Just pick one and lay it down and then figure out what you need next. You can make any pattern, any shape, any design you like. The goal is whatever you make it.

The stepping stones are the fundamentals that I've come across over time in my own healing journey. These are my experiences in my life guiding me towards the truth that I asked for years ago. I set out to understand life, to understand why this journey ends up the way it does. I set out to understand how I got to where I was and then how to get out of that because I wasn't happy there. I set out to understand who I was, how to make my own choices and take my power back, and how to get my life back after I'd spent years giving it away.

I want to take back some of things that I gave up. I want to go back and resume some things that I left behind. I don't want everything back. I don't want to go back to being 34 and start again. I don't need a complete redo. There are just pieces that I left that I want to pick up because they meant a lot to me and I should never have left them behind. We all know because I talk about it constantly, that I don't regret what I did. I understand that the path needed to be what it was and that's okay. That whole thing doesn't have to stop me from recovering some of the pieces that are available to me if I want them.

Those things are conscious choices. Many of us are given, intentionally or unintentionally, the opportunity to redo something if we want to. Life sends us back around the loop and we end up revisiting some old point in time. There's a purpose in that and our job is truly to find that purpose. But what if going back around also gives you the opportunity to make the same choice again? What if it's okay to change that choice?

The Universe has a way of asking us whether we want to change it or not. Are you sure? Are you really sure? If you can be aware of where you are in that way, you get the opportunity to make the conscious choice. The fun part is, and what I try to teach you to do is, to be aware of where you are so that you can make those choices consciously when they show up. Most people never pay enough attention. They just get annoyed that it's happening again. But what if there is more to it?

What if our job is to be aware instead of be annoyed?

One of the easiest examples of this is when you see somebody dating the same type of person over and over and over again. Same trauma and eventual outcome, different human. That endless cycle happens because the person isn't paying attention. They aren't aware of themselves and where they are in their experience. They don't get what's happening and so it just keeps repeating. The Universe keeps trying to show them and they prefer to be clueless and so around they go. This is what I sometimes call living by default. It's the pinball that gets stuck between two objects and just keeps bouncing back and forth. The only way to stop it is to jiggle the machine to make it change direction. Sometimes people need to be jiggled in much the same way. They keep going back and forth between the same things and they aren't aware of it. Eventually the Universe steps in and they get that rude awakening. The sudden jolt sends them off on a new path and maybe they become aware and maybe they don't. Either way though, they learned something about themselves in that moment whether they realized it or not.

So, the goal of this book is to allow you to become aware of where you are and what's happening around you. Learn to see it differently so that you can heal, release the pain, understand what's going on, gain some clarity, and find the truth in your life and your life experience. Everything is showing you something if you're willing to see it. I'll say this many times throughout the book; the truth is never the pain, trauma, and victimization that you add to the story. There is a deeper truth buried under that pain and it's your job to find it.

Join me on this journey as we go find those deeper truths in all of the experiences that we have in our lives, whether we consider them good or bad. The truth is available to all of us. The only question is whether you're willing to see it or not. The opportunity to be honest about your experience is available to you anytime. This book can help you do that if you're ready.

Love to all of you.

Della

CHAPTER ONE
The Decision to Change

Eight years ago I made the choice to heal. I didn't realize what I was getting myself into. I was in a ton of pain and the thought of healing provided some relief from that. It felt better to know that I could change things, that I didn't have to stay where I was, and that there was a path forward. The decision at that moment in time was easy for me because it felt so much better than anything I had been experiencing.

There were a couple of things I needed to do though before I could move forward. First, I had to commit fully to the journey. I needed to understand that this wasn't going to be an easy process but that I could do it if I stayed committed to it. The motivation at that time was in the external goals that I had set for myself. Not being internally motivated wasn't necessarily a bad thing because the pain that had been created from the external world not looking the way I wanted it to was what had motivated me to change in the first place. It only made sense that the goals were external to me.

The second thing I needed to understand was that it wasn't about anybody else. I couldn't do it for anybody else other than myself. It had to be selfish in order to be successful. If I hung success on the back of somebody else, it would always be out of my control. My goals may have been related to other people, but I couldn't make it about them because it wasn't anything I had control over. I had to decide to do this for myself. It had about me and nobody else. Yes, that sounds selfish, but the truth is, without that level of selfishness I couldn't be here writing this book right now. It needed to be this way for a while until I had healed enough to change that too.

The decision you're making doesn't have to be about healing. It could be about moving to a new country, switching jobs, or just simply getting better at saying no to people when you don't want to do things. Regardless of what the thing is we're trying to do, the goal for everybody is to do their own thing their own way. We're committing to our own paths fully without getting caught up in how things are supposed to be.

The decision to change can come at a perceived cost to us and often there are a lot of unknowns. We don't know how people will react to us. We don't know what will happen next. We worry about what we might lose without having any idea what we might gain. What I often say is that familiar pain is better than unfamiliar pain. Even if we're sitting in a pool of hot water, once we're used to it we can stay there for a long time. We no longer feel the need to jump out, even if the water is burning us a bit. We just get okay with being burned. It becomes an acceptable level of pain. At some point in the process, we may even find we are scared to get out of the water because it might feel cold and we don't like that feeling. So now we convince ourselves that being burned is better than being cold and so we stay in the hot water.

When we've been in pain for a long time, sometimes we can get really used to it. Our level of toleration for pain gets pretty high and because we're scared of the unknown, we just stay in the pain. That is, until we don't stay in the pain anymore. The question I ask frequently is how much pain do you need to be in before you change it? What I learned for myself is that I needed to be in a hell of a lot of pain to change it. I needed to lose everything that was important to me. I needed to hit my version of absolute rock bottom before I would change. I get it when people do this to themselves because I did it to myself. I risked everything to stay in pain. I gambled away a heck of a lot to hold myself in the pain, until I popped like an over-filled balloon.

Can you see the pain you're in? Can you recognize that you don't have to stay there? Yes, the unknown is scary, but it will never be as bad as where you are right now. At some point, there is only one way to go and that's up. Have you reached that point yet? If not, why do you need to wait to get there before you change something?

Humans are stubborn like this. We keep trying to make things work even when we're not happy with the way things are. We want to stay where we are for as long as possible because we don't like change. We want to be able to see where we're going, where the path will lead us, and what will happen next. The fun part of the journey is we don't usually get to see the next thing. Usually we have to trust and just take the leap or the next step. That's hard yes, but it's also worth it.

I've sat in plenty of pools of fear willing myself to do or not do things based on what I was being guided to do. There are some very hard moments in my healing journey where I just sat on my couch terrified of what would happen. To some degree, I was paralyzed by the fear of what might happen because it wouldn't allow me to work or focus on anything else. I just had to sit in it until I learned that I didn't really have anything to be afraid of, but that took a while. I had to sit in the fear and then watch what happened next. This was how I learned to be aware of myself in most situations. I would sit in the fear and let time pass, something would happen or not, and I would come out of the fear to look around and see what had happened. It would be sort of like coming out of the basement after a storm to check on things. But when I did that, I would question what was happening. I would question whether the fear was warranted. Was this worth all the fear I just experienced? Am I still alive? Is everything okay?

Unlike an actual storm where the fear may be very much warranted, the stuff I

was afraid of wasn't worth the energy I was putting into it. The goal of those experiences was to learn not to be afraid so that I could understand how to manage my thoughts and feelings while understanding the truth of what was happening around me. All of this work required me to continually decide to keep going, even as I was sitting in the fear, even as things were falling apart around me, even on the really difficult days, I had to decide to keep going.

There were many points along the way where I thought about getting a job, quitting what I was doing, and going back to the comfort of what I knew no matter how unstable that was. But every time I would think about going backward I knew I couldn't do that to myself. I couldn't give up on myself like that, so I just kept making the same choice to move forward, one step at a time, over and over again. Was it easy? Hell no! But it was worth it and I'm glad I continued on. I'm glad I didn't give up.

Here's what I know about this journey so far. You will have to keep making the choice to heal, move forward, and try again. You will have to commit and then commit again if you're going to stay on this path. It's a somewhat selfish journey that requires you to commit to yourself fully. It's selfish only because it requires you to pull your energy back for a bit. It asks you to take care of yourself before taking care of others for a while so that you can create balance in your life. It requires you to make some really hard choices sometimes and it requires you to trust that everything will be okay when you make those hard choices.

There were many spots along the way where I questioned the journey, where I wondered why I was doing this, where I didn't understand what the point was, but I kept going anyway. I got to a sort of strange place in the process where I started to be more curious about what they were trying to show me than I was afraid of what might happen. I had gotten over the fear. My mind was no longer telling me wild stories. I found myself content to play along. Yes, there were many moments of grumbling about what I needed to do, but I always did it anyway. I've written many a blog complaining about things, only to do them in the end. It stopped being a question of whether or not I would do what I was being asked to do, and instead was only a question of how long it would take me to stop complaining and just do it.

I learned that those perceived leaps off of tall cliffs with big rocks at the bottom were more like jumping into a pool of soft foam from 20 feet up. Nothing ever happened or came of it. It always worked out and it was never as scary as my mind would have me believe it was. The choice to make the leap was infinitely harder than anything that happened after I made the choice. I just needed to make a whole bunch of those leaps to learn that. Now that I know it, the leaps are pretty easy most of the time. The trick now is that I have all the tools. Now I get it. Now I understand how to do it. Now I'm okay with questioning it, not buying into the story my mind wants to create, and recognizing where I am and what the truth is behind what's happening.

That's where you'll get to as well but it starts with a choice, just like it did for me. It starts with a choice to feel better, to think better, and to be better off than

you've been. One simple decision to heal or do something different can change your life like it did for me. When you're ready, the next chapters of this book await you. This is a heck of a journey that I'm inviting you to take with me. It's not for the faint of heart. As the saying goes, if it was easy everybody would do it. It isn't easy so most people never even start. Now that you've read chapter 1 you've already begun the journey. Are you ready to begin chapter 2? If you are, let's go. I've got the flashlight and the map. You'll be fine, trust me on this.

CHAPTER TWO
You Are Worthy

I wasn't originally going to talk about worthiness but I'm realizing as I've been writing this book that it's an important topic and one that isn't always discussed the way it needs to be. The idea of being worthy means we feel within ourselves that we deserve the life we want to create. For me in many ways, it's a sense of permission we give ourselves when we feel like we've earned the thing we want.

Maybe as a kid you had chores to do and when you did them successfully you would get a reward or treat of some kind. We carry that idea of needing to earn everything into adulthood. We don't realize and most of us aren't really taught that worthiness is inherent at birth. There is nothing to earn.

The problem we run into is that everybody around us is externally focused and externally motivated. Everything is done based on some external reward. We do things in the external world expecting to get something out of it. Our own individual happiness often isn't enough to get us to do things. Happiness by the way, is an internal motivator. It's the idea of doing things because we want to or because they will make us happy. Instead we are taught to focus externally and do things so that other people are happy or so that we can get paid or so that we can eat. There is nothing wrong with wanting to pay the bills, but if that's your only reason for working, you're not going to be a happy camper.

Being internally motivated requires us to have our worthiness mostly intact. It requires us to have an internal drive to do things on our own terms our own way. It requires us to feel like we're worthy of having the things that we want. It takes the focus off the external and puts it back on ourselves. This tends to scare people because if they focus on themselves who knows what they will find. What if they don't like what they find?

We've buried our sense of worthiness, our drive to create lives that make us happy, and our desire for a better life because our external focus causes fear. What will other people think if I do my own thing? The reward we go after is other people being happy with us instead of us being happy within ourselves.

If we had been taught to be internally motivated by our own desires, we'd be less worried about other people. We'd be more willing to try things. As a parent,

I've worked on creating less external motivation. We do things because we want to not because somebody is making us. The lesson becomes self-fulfilling in a way. If you don't clean your room for 6 months, eventually you'll want it clean and I'll help you when you're ready to do it. After a few years of that sort of cycle, eventually the bedroom was kept clean because they wanted it clean not because I could make them clean it. The same thing was true with bedtime. You go to bed because you're tired and you want to be awake at school the next day. If you don't, you'll be tired the next day and that's no fun. I also realized I can't make anybody sleep. Heck, there were many times I couldn't make myself sleep, let alone anybody else. That was a useless argument I never had. Both the kids learned quick though that if they stayed up too late they'd be tired the next day. They regulated themselves and I didn't argue with them. Yes, I bucked many traditional parenting ideas because I innately recognized the dysfunction they created later on. I could probably write a whole book on the topic, but I'll move on.

Teaching internal motivation did mean letting my kids fail. It meant letting them live like slobs. It meant letting them be tired. It meant letting them go outside without gloves and proper winter gear. It meant letting them do a lot of things that most parents wouldn't dream of letting their kids do. I was hands off a lot of the time until they asked for what they needed. When they asked I fully supported what they wanted every time. I waited until they were motivated. I didn't motivate them.

My oldest daughter is deaf in one ear. She had to learn to how to advocate for herself because I wasn't going to be there all the time. So even at 8 and 9 years old as she got hearing aids, I began to teach her how to say what she needed at school. What I told her was, if your needs aren't being met at school tell me and I'll help you. But it's your job to at least try on your own first. The result is that she's learned to advocate for herself very well now and isn't afraid to do so.

This kind of internal motivation comes from not being made to do things externally. It comes from understanding that you're worthy of what you want and then allowing yourself to have it. When the external motivation isn't there, then the only reason to get out of bed in the morning is because you want to. If you don't feel worthy of a life you want to live, you won't get out of bed.

I can hear a lot of you right now because you'll be telling me you have the internal motivation. Okay then, what's stopping you? All the other stuff in this book? The next however many chapters?

When you are motivated internally you will also do the work to get over the other stuff without worrying about the outcome. Put your motivation into feeling better instead of into the outcome. Notice where my focus went. I shifted it right there.

As the parent I was moving towards the outcome I wanted, but I still had to figure out how to work toward that in the present and be patient. Well guest what? You have to do the same thing with your own dreams and goals. It's not really about the outcome. It's about the journey and enjoying the process. Learning to be okay where you are is not only part of motivation, it's also part of being worthy.

* * *

You don't have to fight with your worthiness if you have enough motivation to move forward. Honestly, fighting with your worthiness is a losing game because you ego will never you let you convince yourself you're worthy until it thinks you've done enough or achieved enough. That's just the way the ego works. It will try to protect you from disappointment by constantly moving the bar for whatever success looks like for you. You'll never get there because it's a moving target.

Worthiness for me has become a sense of power. It is the feeling that I am good enough, I can do it, and it's okay that I do it. But that came after I got over all the fear and worry. That came after I let go of the outcome and started enjoying the process. That came after I figured out what I was doing in terms of my career and how it was meant to look. (I've sorted that out while writing this book.) It came after I released all the pain and stopped over-thinking everything. Worthiness came last, not first.

There were two things I didn't fight with on this journey. The first was my confidence. I just dragged it around like dead-weight for a long time. The second was my worthiness because I had to prove that to myself. But I didn't put the bar out of reach. I learned about reasonable goals and expectations too so that I wasn't constantly defeating myself. After all that, then I allowed myself to be worthy.

For some of you, maybe you're fighting with the idea that you're worthy enough to simply heal yourself. This is more of a sense of permission than it is worthiness, but I want to talk about permission, because I do believe it is part of worthiness.

Permission means you're agreeing to go on the journey. You want to do the thing. It means you're willing to try. You're willing to start the process. I remember when I agreed to go on the journey. Because of the sheer amount of pain I was in at the time, that decision offered immediate relief. I felt better instantly just knowing I didn't have to try to win the other battle with the immense pain I was feeling. Honestly, I didn't think I could win it at the time.

So with a sense of relief in hand because healing hand to be easier than wrestling with the pain, I started the journey using my intuition and my tarot cards. The first step was simply understanding my life and the choices I'd made. How did I end up here? It wasn't about what other people did to me. It wasn't about anything anybody else had done. It was all about how my perception had affected my choices and that my perception wasn't necessarily accurate.

I didn't get all the gory details back then. I actually got very few details because I would have victimized myself with them. I would have beaten myself up. It would have made things worse for me to know some of the things I know now. But, I got enough to feel like I could be okay and accept what was what.

At every step along the way, I had to give myself permission to keep going. I didn't fight with my confidence. I just latched onto the outcome and bit too much and used it to pull me along. That strategy served a purpose in the beginning. If you're there, it's okay to latch onto that outcome for a bit and use it as a kind of tow rope. At the beginning when you're wading through so much crap, it's okay to need the tow line and a solid, very motivating outcome to pull you forward. You won't do the work otherwise. I get that.

Give yourself permission to go through that phase. You need that phase. It's a valid part of the process and certainly it's one that I went through. The idea behind the information that I was getting was for me to learn that I wasn't a victim. It was to start removing the stories of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization that I was telling. I had to drop all that and own my own stuff without holding other people responsible for it. Yes, that includes how I reacted to things other people did do "to me". My reaction is my responsibility regardless of what other people are doing. Nobody deserves more pain so eventually, I learned to control my reactions. That came way later, but that was part of the process.

The idea of permission is being okay with what you're doing and where you are. It's okay to go on the journey. It's okay to be where I am. There is nothing wrong with what did happen, what will happen, or even what is happening right now. It's all okay. Let's be honest. I did not accept the journey very well. I actually argued with it all the time. I was bound and determined to achieve my goal, but I didn't do it without a fight.

There were places on my journey that I didn't want to be. There will things on my journey that were hard to accept. At the beginning especially, those first hurdles took months to get over because the process was so new to me. I still thought I had to fight with my confidence. I had to continually give myself permission to move forward. I had to argue with myself to drop things because of the fear around doing that. I gave myself permission almost daily at the beginning because I was scared to death of what I was doing. The truth is that for me that fear felt better than the pain and the fear was the battle I thought I could win. I thought the pain would kill me.

Sitting here now writing this, I had to win both battles and I did. It was by winning the battle of fear that I allowed myself to deep dive into the pain and survive it. That was when I realized it was only shadows. There was nothing there to be afraid of. There was nothing there to hurt me. The pain was triggered by memories. The memories weren't happening then, so there was no reason for the pain. I was able to release the pain when I understood that the memories didn't have to be so triggering. It was one of the first things that I accomplished in my journey. That first accomplishment meant I didn't need to constantly give myself permission anymore. Suddenly it was okay to go on the journey because I'd shown myself I could handle it.

Fear of failure is the reason why giving ourselves permission is hard. What if I can't do that either? You can do it. You just can't do it in one giant leap. You have to move step by step. You have to move more slowly and you may not do it quickly.

Those first few hurdles took forever. I kept repeating the cycle of those hurdles until I finally jumped them. One thing I managed not to do was get really down on myself for not being able to move as quickly as I would have liked. I suppose some of that was my desire to reach my goal. The goal was powerful enough that I wasn't giving up no matter how long it took. That allowed me to keep giving myself permission to stay there and do the thing no matter what.

What I want you to see is that I didn't have the worthiness back then. I didn't

have the confidence either. What I had was internal motivation and a whole lot of determination. That was it. I used the stubborn streak I'd developed as a protection mechanism to just decide to stay there and keep going. Pure stubborn determination is what got me through those first couple of years of healing.

Eventually, I did have to stop arguing with it and I did have to decide to do it anyway. If I hadn't finally gotten to a place where I wasn't always looking for the nearest exit, I couldn't do this right now. But I didn't start there. It took me probably 5 or 6 years before I actually stayed in the room voluntarily. It's only now that I'm finally feeling worthy of what I'm doing.

The best advice I can give you is to not argue with your worthiness. Don't make it a moving target. Don't let it stop you. Use the outcome as a tow rope. The outcome might be the big dream that you have and that's perfect. Use that to pull your forward for a while until you can stand there on your own.

Notice what I'm doing. I'm making it okay to start where you are, which is exactly what I had to do. If starting where you are means you have no confidence and you don't feel worthy of it and you need a big external goal to pull you forward, then so be it. Arguing with any of that just keeps you from moving forward. You're just sabotaging yourself. It's okay to use what you have and start where you are. None of this stuff makes you less worthy. It makes you stronger because it means you're willing to use what you have which may not be very much, and you're willing to do the thing anyway. That's huge. That will get you through that first bit until your worthiness and your confidence catch up to you.

Keep going.

CHAPTER THREE
The Lie of Old Trauma

We begin by looking back to the past for more information. We use the past to both interpret the present and predict the future. This is where the lie begins because the past is not a predictor of anything, it is only a reflection of what was. The very simple truth at the basis of everything in this chapter is that the past is the lie. The truth of the present and the future cannot be found in the past. We need to learn to see and interpret the past differently if we wish to understand what is happening in the present. We leave the future alone because it hasn't happened yet and our power is not in front of us it is within us in the present moment.

When I look back at my childhood, I see a very quiet, shy girl that wanted to fade into the woodwork. My sun sign is Cancer and I was a textbook Cancer native as a child. I was all the things an astrologer would expect of a Cancer. What I learned early on was that those things weren't going to serve me. Being true to my sun sign's watery nature would only get me run over in life, or so it seemed. I was bullied in school and I didn't have enough fire power to stand up for myself or defend myself against those childhood bullies.

I've talked almost ad nauseam about the powerlessness that I've experienced in my life. One of the lessons that I took with me was that emotions were a problem. Unknowingly as a teenager, I began to access all of the fiery energy that lives in my astrological birth chart. The mix of fire and water meant that now I was an emotional fire storm, reacting wildly to the things that would happen in my life. That fire power was both helpful and harmful, depending on how I used it. It probably protected me from worse trauma, but it also turned me into a bull in a china shop and sometimes I couldn't control the damage that I was creating.

There were many patterns and habits that I created from the pain that I carried with me from childhood. Most of those were born of the powerlessness that I had taken on. Since I perceived my emotions to be the problem, I put them away. I stopped feeling. I learned to put a smile on my face and pretend that everything was okay no matter what was going on around me. I never cried in public. The whole room could be balling their eyes out and I would be a stone statue devoid of any visible emotion. What I'd learned how to do was not acknowledge myself, what

I wanted, or how I felt. That pattern of avoiding myself would absolutely get me into trouble. As a teenager it created depression with suicidal tendencies. As an adult, it meant I spent a lot of time creating things in my life that the people around me thought I should be, do, or have.

The pattern of people-pleasing was part of the powerlessness that I had taken on. I wasn't powerless at all though. It was a wound that I carried with me from all those years of being bullied and of being told by parents and caregivers that my choices weren't okay, that there was something wrong with me, and that I wasn't allowed to have the life I wanted. To be fair, most of those messages that I picked up weren't given directly. I didn't have anybody directly tell me that there was something wrong with me, but that was the message my childhood mind picked up and carried with it.

My life experiences offered me strategies for how to be in the world to make my life as frictionless as possible. They were coping mechanisms and survival skills. If emotions got me into trouble, then simply putting them away would solve the problem. If my choices or actions were wrong, then not making choices or doing anything independently would solve the problem. I learned powerlessness as a coping mechanism so that I could make it through my childhood hopefully in one piece. However, when I became an adult, those coping mechanisms and survival skills were not only unnecessary, they actually caused more problems than they solved. This is where the story and the lie begins.

The reason we hang onto the coping mechanisms is because we don't see them that way. We don't see them as the way we managed the trauma we experienced. We see them as how we are taught to be in the world. We see them as who we are because we identify with them so strongly. Because we see them this way we don't think to change them. We don't realize that those old ways of being are actually the things that are keeping us stuck. The real fear is not of what might happen in the external world, but who we will become as a result of healing ourselves and what we might find along the way.

I have an application form that I ask potential clients to fill out if they want to work with me privately. On that application form, I ask people what they are most of afraid of in terms of their journey, and almost every time they tell me they are afraid of what they might find. What that really is, is the fear of having to accept that we aren't good enough to have or don't deserve to have the life that we want. We think somehow we have to earn it because most of the time our parents and caregivers teach us that we have to earn everything.

How many of you were told you had to earn respect? How many of you were told that you had to earn the right to stay home alone or go out with your friends? How many of you were told that you had to work for or earn everything you wanted in life no matter big or small it was? This idea of needing to earn everything becomes a way of being. What happens when we internalize that and we don't recognize it is that we won't let ourselves have things until we think we've earned them. That might look like working 80 hours a week because we don't think we deserve to be paid if we work less than that. It might mean that we never even try because we don't believe we deserve the possibility of success. It might mean we undercharge for our work because it seems easy to us and therefore we don't

deserve to be paid well for it.

These types of coping mechanisms exist in all of us. We all do something that is keeping us stuck in some way. Most of the time we don't see those things until we consciously go looking for them. I try to share all the things that I find within myself hoping that it will help somebody else see it within themselves and make the change on their own. I'm not the only one with those coping mechanisms, I'm just making the effort to become aware of them and I am willing to share what happens when I do.

Sometimes in spiritual circles we talk about the idea of taking responsibility for ourselves and the things that have happened in our lives. That often leads to a discussion about victim shaming and blaming. I want to take a minute to address this because it fits into what I offer all the time. Taking responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, actions, and words means accepting the past and who we became because of that past. We look at all aspects of how we function and respond in our lives and we decide to take control of every aspect of it. How we function in our lives may well be the result of trauma, but we can't change the trauma. We can't go back and fix that. The only thing we can do is take control of ourselves and change the behaviors we picked up from the trauma. That is how we take responsibility for the pain we've experienced.

Most people just accept that they have all these crazy ways of being and that is who they are and there is nothing they can do to change it. That's simply not true. It's this lack of taking responsibility for our own behavior, regardless of how we learned that behavior, that keeps us in pain. This is part of the reason why we so many people project so much pain. It's because they haven't yet taken responsibility for their own behavior. It's easier to just blame it on whatever happened in the past or whatever is happening around them in the present.

We have to be consciously aware of our own behavior and learn to see it as not only part of the personality we are born with, but also as a product of our life experiences. The goal is to own our behavior without shaming ourselves or victimizing ourselves in any way. Owning the behavior implies awareness and the ability to change it. There is no blame or shame involved. We want to question the behavior. Why do we respond like that? What's the story we're telling ourselves? Where did that behavior come from? What's a better behavior? What's a healthier or happier way of being? What's the new behavior we want to create that isn't based on some old trigger or trauma we carry around?

Part of the healing process is the acceptance that healing is a never-ending process. We're not going for perfection and we're not trying to rid ourselves of the human ego or personality. We are simply always working towards being better than we were 5 minutes ago. The goal is constant expansion. Constantly working towards awareness or self-improvement doesn't imply there is anything wrong with us. It doesn't imply that we are broken and need fixing. What it does imply is that we are trying to be the best version of ourselves that we can and we're willing to see our behavior in such a way that allows us to continually improve on those behaviors.

Hanging onto those behaviors because we've just decided that's who we are is what keeps us living from the pain. We can't heal because we haven't changed our behavior. We're still stuck in coping mechanisms. We keep creating more pain because we're creating using old behaviors and ideas that are no longer valid. They are no longer part of who we are. They are based on previous experience that is no longer happening. It is only once we realize that we are no longer the person that experienced that old trauma, that we can begin to change. The process I'm encouraging you to work through is the one where you acknowledge your own behavior and have the courage to begin to change it. This is how we take responsibility for ourselves and the pain we've experienced.

We all have some level of pain in our lives. Nobody comes into this life without experiencing pain somewhere along the way. The goal is not a perfect, happy life with no pain and no trauma. That's not why we're here. We are here for the bad experiences as much as we are here for the good ones. We shouldn't be wishing away the bad experiences. We need to be acknowledging those as a source of learning and growth because they give us the ability to understand ourselves better. Every experience I've had, both good and bad, has allowed me to begin to understand myself. I've used the pain and trauma I've experienced to understand my own behavior and then start to change it. I've broken many coping mechanisms that I had picked up from pain. Was I afraid of what would happen if I did? Did I wonder who I would be without those behaviors? Yes. The honest truth is that the personality doesn't change a whole bunch. It is the energy behind the personality that changes, which then changes our response to the things that happen in our lives.

When something happens if we're not aware of ourselves we just react without thinking. That reaction is based on previous programming and previous experience. It's based on a habit of response that we have learned. It's based on somebody teaching us that this is how we respond to this type of event. It's not based on conscious thought. We don't give ourselves a second to decide how to respond to things. We respond automatically all the time. This is unconscious living. It is living on auto-pilot. Learning to give ourselves time to consciously choose a response that isn't based on our own pain is conscious living. This what my definition of awareness is. It's what it means to be aware of ourselves within the experience. We look at the experience and we determine what the appropriate response is and we filter out our own pain when we do it. We don't allow ourselves to get caught in the stories of pain and trauma the mind will create or remind us of. We're aware of our own triggers and we don't allow those to become a source of guidance for what to do next.

Is that easy? Hell no! I've had to become aware of myself within the experience. Sometimes the awareness comes later, it comes after something has already happened. Sometimes I don't get to interject before I react. That's okay. I don't beat myself up for those moments. They are just part of the human experience. My goal is, even if it happens after the fact, to understand the what and why of my reaction. What was the trigger? Why was that there? How was my response affected by that trigger? What was the unconscious story I was telling myself? How do I change it so that it doesn't happen again? How can I become more aware of

myself within this specific experience?

You may wonder whether I ever get tired of constantly questioning myself. By the way, if I don't do it naturally, my cards will remind me every time. To be honest, there are days where I really do just want to get stuck in my stuff for a while. This is where the balance is because I can push myself through it yes, but sometimes I need to just acknowledge the human experience and accept that my human needs a day in the mud. I can be okay with that too. It's the recognition that even when I don't want to take control right away, I'm still in control and I get to decide when and how I do that. I don't have to do it immediately. I can allow myself to be there. It might be temporarily dis-empowering, it might temporarily slow me down, but it won't stop me and it doesn't have to result in chaos. I can just allow myself to be without needing to fix anything and that's totally okay.

The constant need to push will burn us out pretty fast. It's not a coincidence that I'm writing about it at the moment, because it's kind of where I am. I've pushed and pushed and pushed to work towards my external goals. I've been constantly pushing to heal myself, change the way I function, do things differently, be consistently aware, and that constant push has tired me out in some ways. I'm not burned out from working. I'm not over-working myself in terms of creating content. But I am over-working myself in terms of healing because healing became my work. My job was to heal, understand myself, and share that process. What I think I ended up doing unintentionally and unconsciously was deciding that I got paid to heal, so that if I wasn't always healing, I wouldn't make any money. My job was to stay constantly ahead and keep moving forward. I put myself in a bit of a loop.

Blame, shame, guilt, victimization are things we do to ourselves and each other. They are the stories we tell as a result of the experiences we have in our lives. Things happen that are out of our control. We don't always get to choose every experience we have in our lives. What we do get to choose is how we respond or react to it whether in the moment or after the fact. We do get to choose what to think about what happened. Those ideas are important to remember as we discuss each one of these things in the text below. Blame is a story we tell when somebody causes us pain. The blame is in what they potentially did to us or what they projected onto us. The result is that we blame other people for how we feel. You did this to me and you made me feel bad. It's your fault I feel this way. It's your fault I live like this. It's your fault I had this experience.

Here's the truth behind this. No matter what somebody does to you or projects onto you, you are in charge of how you feel and what you tell yourself about the experience after it happens. We aren't blaming the victim for anything. It's a simple matter of recognizing that our thoughts and feelings are our own. They aren't anybody else's responsibility, whether they do something to you or not. That means you can make the choice to shift the blame by understanding that the experience is meant to learn from.

The Universe isn't trying to hurt you. God, if you believe in that idea, isn't out to punish you for anything. Human free will means that when people are in pain

they get to choose what to do with it. Sometimes people get so consumed in their pain that they actually physically, emotionally, and/or mentally harm other people because of it. But just like they have the choice of what to do with their pain, so do you. They chose to lash out and hurt you. You can choose to accept that pain, stay there, and blame the other person for it, or figure out a different way to look at it that allows you to take responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings.

What is a better way to look at it? Recognize the pain of the other person. Recognize how much pain you would have to be in to do the same thing to somebody else. Recognize that you're not there and that you wouldn't think about or even consider doing that to somebody else, but they did. Recognize that the pain they showed you wasn't about you and their lashing out had nothing to do with you. When we can recognize the pain in other people we can begin to move to compassion. By moving to compassion it gives us the space to take responsibility for ourselves. That's the key. It's all about the recognition that we are in control of how we think and feel about everything that happens in our lives, no matter how good or bad we think those things are.

Shame and guilt are very similar. They both come from the idea that we did something wrong, that we should have somehow known better, and possibly that it's our fault the thing happened. The way we heal these ideas is through acceptance of ourselves and our actions or inactions. The story that says it should have been different or that I should have known better means you're mad at yourself for what you didn't know. If you decide to learn a new skill, do you get mad at yourself for not knowing how to do that new thing yet? Of course not. Why do we look back at old versions of ourselves, take out the hammer, and beat ourselves up with it?

The idea that the older version of yourself could have done better or should have known better is a loop. It traps you because there is no way for you to go back and fix what you did or didn't do. You can't change it. What are you accomplishing by beating yourself up for it? Nothing. It's just a form of self-punishment. You're putting yourself into a life sentence of hard time because of something you think you should have done differently. If your older version of yourself could have done better, they would have. It's that simple.

You let yourself off the hook by accepting that you did the best you could from where you were. By not allowing yourself to accept it, you're just arguing with it. The problem with that is that you can't win the fight. It's a useless battle because you can't go back and change anything. So you're arguing with something you don't have control over anymore. How is that helping you move forward? What are you accomplishing?

The thing you have control over is where you are right now and what you do from here. Okay, so you screwed up in the past, perfect. Now, how do you move forward in a way that allows you to learn the lessons of the past? What behavior, idea, belief, pattern, or habit do you need to change to make sure you don't repeat that cycle? That's what you can do. That's what you have control over. You prove to yourself that you have changed, that you are no longer the person that would do that thing. It allows you to move forward in that new way. That's how you work toward acceptance. That's how you get out of the loop of shame and guilt.

Victimization says somebody did that to me. So let's be clear about something up front. Not having control over what happens and deciding to be a victim of it are two entirely different concepts. It's not about what happens to you it's about what you do with what happens to you. Making yourself a victim in your head spins up the story of blame. It puts what happened and how you're feeling on the other person. That means that you're giving up the control you do have, which is over yourself, your thoughts, and your feelings. It's okay to be upset about what happened. It's not that you shouldn't be angry or upset. It's about taking responsibility for those feelings on your own without making them the fault of somebody else. The second you victimize yourself you give up control over your own thoughts and feelings. That's what keeps you stuck in the pain. To heal you have to take responsibility for those thoughts and feelings. That's the only way healing works. As long as you're in some sort of victimization or blame you can't move, you can't heal, and then you have to create coping mechanisms to deal with it. The coping mechanisms become the habits and patterns that will keep you stuck later on.

Do you see the loops you create when you hold onto pain? When we can take responsibility for how we feel or think about anything that happens to us in our lives, we free ourselves to feel pain and release it. Pain is not meant to be a souvenir. You're not meant to hang onto it. The idea of pain is to catch and release it, not to wear it like a costume, not to identify with it, and not to hang onto it to deal with later. You allow the pain to be there, you question why its there, you understand what the story is behind the pain, and then you release the whole thing. Does that happen immediately? No and that's okay. The goal is not necessarily speed but recognize that the longer we spend trying to process pain, the more likely we are to hold onto it.

Pain is addictive. What if you saw pain the same way as you see addiction to anything else? Would you hold onto it the same way? We get so caught up in the story of pain that we tell ourselves, that we actually make it very difficult for ourselves to let go of it. We get addicted to it because it's the only thing we know. We don't see it as an addiction. We see it as "normal". We see it as just who we are. We create that ego identification with the pain. Some people will add, usually unintentionally, more addictions to mask the original pain. This just spirals out of control for a while, until hopefully one day, they finally find themselves in enough pain that they do something about it.

What's all this about? Why do we do this to ourselves? We stay in pain because we don't learn how to heal. Our parents and caregivers all had their own pain that they hadn't healed. They can't teach you what they haven't done themselves. Because we don't learn how to heal it normalizes being in pain. Normalization of pain is okay in one sense because we don't want pain to become stigmatized, but in the sense that it means that everybody does it and so that makes it "normal" or okay in some way is a problem. Look around you. This is what happens when the majority of people are in pain and don't recognize that they can change that. This is what normalization looks like when the pendulum is swung too far in one direction.

What we're going for is balance, right? It's okay that we have people in pain but

we need to have a better balance of people that aren't in quite that much pain. It's not about being completely healed. It's about being able to manage it better and not throw it around all the time. What I'm trying to do in this book is give you a way to recognize the pain within yourself and manage it better, maybe even heal it, so that you don't throw it around so much. The more people we can have that aren't tossing pain around, the better the balance becomes. Let's take a second to honor that journey because it's a big deal. You're here and you're willing to do the work. That takes guts. This isn't an easy journey for any of us. I appreciate the challenge in it and I hope you can see how incredibly powerful you are in making the choice to do something different with your life. Personally, I'm incredibly grateful for my own journey and I hope that you too can find gratitude in the path that you're on.

CHAPTER FOUR
Acceptance of a New Plan

Acceptance is the act of not arguing with it anymore. So first, let's talk about the argument because that's where we start from. That's where we begin the journey. The pain and the problem of it is where most of us find the catalyst to begin to heal. When we've finally decide we've had enough of the pain, we move forward and change it.

Sometimes I ask the people I work with whether they want to change it or wait for the pain to show up. It's kind of a jarring question and it's a little confronting. The thing is, if you don't change it out of fear you will eventually find the pain behind all that. The fear you're feeling is showing you that there is something there to deal with. You just have to decide to deal with whatever that is. Sure, you can wait for the pain! You're not going to be happy with that process though. By the time the pain gets there the fear will be worse, you may even have created some things to hold yourself back and prevent yourself from living your life. The deal is, you don't have to do any of that if you can recognize that you're stopping yourself before you get to the place where you're miserable. We do this through the art of acceptance.

The fear is going to be there. Sometimes, depending on the situation, the fear won't go away until you do the thing. Think of a skydiver or trying to jump into a cold pool or riding a roller coaster for the first time, the fear is just there until you do it. You're not going to heal the fear before you jump in or go on the ride. So you can either decide to watch from the sidelines and enjoy the fear or you can do it anyway. That's a choice that you get to make. Trying to wait out the fear doesn't work. It just keeps you stuck.

Sitting in fear was something I had to do. The rent wasn't paid and we were probably going to get evicted and I had to sit in that fear because there was nothing I could do to fix it. I had to ride that one out. Yes, we got evicted but we ended up better off than where we got evicted from. I know what sitting in that fear is. That wasn't the only time I've had to do it either. Conquering my fear meant sitting in it, letting things happen or letting time pass, and then paying very close attention to

the outcome so that I could question whether the fear was true or not.

There's a story that the mind will tell about how bad things are going to happen. The mind loves to make this stuff up. So, what ends up happening when people challenge the fear is that they don't pay attention to the outcome enough to recognize that the story of the mind wasn't true. If they are happy about the outcome they forget all about the fear they experienced beforehand. They are just happy nothing bad happened. If they actually spent a few minutes questioning what had happened they would suddenly realize the mind made all that stuff up. That realization would allow them to begin healing the fear if they had paid attention.

The fear comes from arguing with what is and that's why it's so important that we pay attention to the outcome. The story of what is was that I was going to get evicted. Everything that came after that in my head was the story of the mind and that story wasn't true. My awareness of myself within my own experience meant that I was well aware of the fact that everything turned out fine. So after we moved and I got the opportunity to sit for a minute, I actually had a good laugh at myself. The fear was completely unnecessary. It was a waste of energy. What I started watching for in my experience after that was for things to work out. I started paying more attention to the idea that nothing horrible would happen and that I would be okay. The more I've watched that play out, even with some slip ups along the way, I've realized that the fear I used to feel in simply living my life wasn't true. All of the feat I had felt my entire life wasn't true. It had prevented me from doing and experiencing a lot of things that I wanted to experience. Some of it I'm going back now to do and experience, but there are other pieces that I can't go back and get. I'm okay with that for myself, but I know for sure that if I can help you avoid that experience, I'm willing to write as many to write as many books as I need to to do it.

What does this have to do with acceptance? Fear is the argument with what is and what will be. Acceptance means we get okay with the fear. Acceptance usually means we feel the fear and do it anyway. It means we're willing to take the risk and try it. We're willing to allow ourselves to see what happens. We begin to learn that we'll be okay regardless of what happens. The real question isn't whether or not it'll work out. The real question is whether or not you think you can handle what comes next. Usually the fear comes from not being able to handle the next experience. What if you can handle it though? What if the fear is just preventing you from having that experience?

Fear means there is an unknown and the mind is filling in that gap with what it knows. Usually that gap filler isn't all that helpful so it's a good idea to be conscious of your thoughts and fill the space with something that is hopeful and helpful. Don't just let the mind run wild. Learn to control it a little bit so it doesn't prevent you from doing what you want so much.

Can you accept the unknown? Can you accept that you might not know how it's going to turn out? Can you make that okay for yourself? Does it have to be a problem? Do you have to create all that fear? Can you find a way to know and trust that you will be okay regardless of what happens?

There is stability in trust and in finding hope in the future. There is stability in

knowing that you can handle it. There is stability in knowing that everything is going to be okay. Often we don't believe that though. We don't believe we'll be alright and that we can handle it. That takes away the hope and trust we would have otherwise. When we lose hope we stop trusting ourselves. They go together in some ways. I know there are people out there that will tell you to screw hoping for things and just do them, and that's fine for some people. But when you're healing and maybe your self-esteem or confidence aren't quite where they need to be, hope is a good alternative. It gives you something to look forward to and work towards. It can be a little bit of a substitute when your confidence isn't necessarily coming along for the ride voluntarily.

This is probably the only place where I would tell you that positive thinking is a good thing. It gets a bad rap but we don't necessarily need to toss out the whole concept, we just need to focus it a little better. When we're looking at the future, if we let the mind fill in the empty space that is the unknown future, it will put in pain from the past because that's what it knows. If you can consciously fill that space with hope and positivity then you're learning to control your thinking. You're learning how to move forward without getting caught in the fear behind what might happen in the future.

This isn't about weighing your options or understanding the pros and cons of things. Once you've made the choice to do something and you've worked through the logic around it, you can't stay in the "what if". You have to move forward with the idea that you will be successful. If you stay focused on the problem with it, the cons, the things that might go wrong, you bring in that energy and it creates fear. That fear is what traps you. The fear of the unknown is what freaks you out and makes you turn around or change your mind. Somewhere you have to decide to get okay with your own choice. You have to decide to find the hope, the positivity, the joy, even if you don't know the outcome because that's what the fear at bay and allows you to move forward anyway.

Self-doubt, insecurity, and worries about what other people will think often keep us from doing the things we want to do in our lives. Certainly for me I created a life that I didn't want because of a complete sense of powerlessness and insecurity. The one thing that I never gave myself until I decided to heal, was permission. I kept looking for permission in the outside world. Not surprisingly, I never found it. It wasn't out there. I had to give myself my own permission to do my own thing my own way. Until I did that, the outside world would never accept what I was doing.

When people feel some sort of lack within themselves like I did, they go looking outside of themselves for whatever they are missing. What generally happens is, unless we're surrounded by a bunch of super supportive people, we get told what we shouldn't do and why our ideas are bad. That creates the internal tug-of-war where we argue with what we want because the outside world is busy telling us no, but the internal desire remains present.

What do we do when the outside world says no? We give ourselves permission and do it anyway because that's how we end the tug-of-war that is taking place within us. But hang on Della, that isn't as easy as you make it sound. I hear you! It

isn't easy, but it is simple. Here's the deal. By giving yourself internal permission and moving forward anyway, you're asking those around you to accept you as you are while giving you the space to live your life on your own terms.

I changed my name while writing this. My old name for those that don't know is Laura Bungarz. Bungarz is married name. My maiden name is Henderson. The truth is I haven't liked my name for a long time. Laura Henderson was really generic and bland. Laura Bungarz offered some uniqueness but it came with the identity of being married to somebody I no longer wanted to be married to. I knew that I didn't want to go back to my maiden name either. I also knew that divorce was a while off for a number of reasons and so it left me in this sort of limbo where I didn't like either of the obvious options that were available to me. That meant I had to make a choice. I could get okay with the standard plan of maintaining my married name until divorce and then going back to my maiden name, or I could give myself permission to do my own thing and spend the couple hundred bucks to change my name legally a lot quicker.

All of that came with giving myself permission to do my own thing. If I called up my parents and asked them for permission to change my name they would say no. If I went looking for permission outside of myself I would get a lot of questions, a lot of doubt, some fear, and maybe some concerns. I would get told to wait, slow down, or even stop completely. That would add a layer of doubt into my plan. Do I need to take on other people's doubt or can I just do my own thing?

That depends on how much you override your own authority. What does that mean? It means you go looking outside of yourself for permission because you're unable or unwilling to decide for yourself to just do it. You don't trust your own choices. You don't trust yourself to make things happen. You don't believe you can just do your own thing. You take on other people's ideas of how things should be and you allow those things to influence your choices.

To accept your own choices you have to stop taking on everybody else's stuff. You have to take your power back and trust your own authority. You have to give yourself permission to do your own thing. If or when you do go out looking for opinions do it with intention, make sure you're not creating imbalance within yourself by only focusing on the problems with your choice, give yourself the freedom to do your own thing anyway.

There isn't anything wrong with asking for advice or opinions. It's what we do with what comes back to us that's the problem because most of the time other people's opinions focus us on the problems with our choices. That's what gets us into trouble. When we just focus on problems, we're suddenly stuck. The mind goes down the rabbit hole of negative thinking and then we can't move forward. Suddenly we have dozens of problems to solve first. But what if that isn't true? What if people are just projecting their own pain and fears? What if those things have nothing to do with you?

It's okay to make a pros and cons list, just don't let yourself focus only on the cons. What happens is the that the mind immediately wants to solve all the cons or problems first. It won't let you move forward until you create a completely secure and solid plan that has no cons or potential problems with it. The mind is truly

doing its job to protect you but it's also making it impossible for you to do your own thing. Yes, create the pros and cons list if you need to, but don't use the cons as all the reasons why not. Learn to accept the fear that comes with taking a risk.

The fear of jumping out of a plane doesn't go away until you jump out of the plane. The fear of the cold pool doesn't go away until you're in the cold pool. The fear will be there and you will have to learn how to feel it, manage it, and do things anyway. If you don't learn those skills, you'll be trapped in your life as it is for a long time. So what does that look like for you? Where is the fear that you need to learn to manage and accept? How can you move forward anyway?

In the time it has taken me to write this (months), a lot has shifted for me in terms of the balance in my life, what my business looks like, and how I balance within myself. When I dropped the fear I used to feel all the time I replaced it with control. That looked like offering all kinds of stuff in my work. It looked like me trying to do all the things as a way to manage the instability in my life. Did that work? No, of course not. It was an imbalance in me that had me focusing only on earning an income and not just doing what I was passionate about. My passion is talking ad nauseam about all this stuff, but when I make my focus about the money, it throws my passion off balance. What is the real problem here? Most people would say the lack is the real problem and that I need to fix that first. The truth is the opposite. I need to love my passion and then the money thing fixes itself.

Does that make logical sense? Absolutely not and that's why people like me get stuck in this loop. The practical, logical mind wants to take over and if we're not paying attention, or frankly even if we are, we end up stuck in what we don't want because doing what we want seems scary and isn't practical. Getting out of that means overriding the logical mind, accepting that there is going to be some risk, managing the fear, and trusting that whatever happens we will be fine. We can handle what comes next.

It's not practical for me to stop posting to the 1000 people that are friends or follow my personal profile and only to post to the 20 or 30 people in my group, but I'm going to anyway. Why? Because I want to create those connections. The people that want to see my work deserve to be able to find it easily and they deserve to be able to comment on it or share their own experience with it freely, without worrying about who might see it. I'm comfortable sharing publicly because that was part of my journey. Not everybody is there yet and that's okay. I can honor that by the using the group the way I had originally intended it to be used.

Do you want to know something? I went looking at another person that I follow to see how she balanced her group versus her page and what I saw was sound bites on her page and more complete explanations in her group. That model made sense to me. I can do my own version of that so that it balances and doesn't feel overwhelming. I've been looking for that balance for a long time. The fear kept me from doing it. I would rationalize that she had 2000 people in her group and could do that, but since I only had 20, that wasn't realistic. Do you see where the practical mind wants to go? Getting over the fear and not turning fear into control

meant allowing that balance to happen naturally and not worrying about the practical. The practical will take of itself because of the balance I create within myself.

You have to be able to manage the fear and recognize the cycles to do this. You won't allow yourself to do it otherwise. That's where people can get into trouble. They try to do things but then don't recognize the energy behind what they are doing. The thing then fails and they are upset, but they didn't pay attention to themselves so they didn't deal with the fear they felt and had to walk away from what they were doing when the fear got to be too much. Where has this happened to you? What does it look for you? Can you learn to pay to the fear and deal with it while moving forward at the same time?

The fear did come up for me. It's back there now actually. I can recognize it as I'm talking about all this. I already know that I'm going to have to sit in it a little bit. I'm okay with that. I know how to manage fear. Mostly for me, it's just a habit anyway. There is nothing to be afraid of. There is no reason to be bothered by creating balance in my life. The fear is from the idea that the audience isn't big enough anymore. So where's the lie in that? Well, even with an audience of over 1000 people, I still wasn't financially stable. The size of the audience wasn't the problem. I like to make it the problem, but that doesn't mean it is the problem. The problem was that my focus was on money instead of just sharing my passion. If I just share my passion, the idea is that I won't have to worry about money. That's the path I've been led down. Is that true? Well, this is how I'm going to prove it to myself. I'm going to sit in the fear, shift the balance in terms of what I offer and where I post, and then watch what happens.

The rush to judgment of the logical mind is what has prevented me from doing this. The logical mind assumes that the bigger audience is necessary and the fear shows up even without a conscious thought because it's a habit. I'm triggering old wounds by not giving into the old way of being. I free myself from those old wounds by recognizing what I'm doing, understanding why I'm doing it, and allowing myself to consciously disconnect from the old pain. I'm not healing old trauma, there is no cry it out session happening. There is just a disconnection from the old way of being. I release the pain by disconnecting from it, not healing it. It's a conscious process that requires me to pay attention to my behavior. I pay attention to myself within the experience. I make choices about my behavior based on what I see in the outside world. I check for the outcome. I watch what happens and then I adjust my behavior as a way to shift the outcome if I want to.

While I do all that, I avoid the rush to judgment of the world around me. When I see an outcome, I don't immediately judge it as good or bad either. I question how I got there. What was the energy behind what I did? Does anything need to shift? Am I okay? Was the story true? How do I feel? What am I telling myself? These are all things that I have to be aware of all the time. This is what true awareness looks like. It's a 24-hour a day thing that we do consciously and intentionally. The continuous checking in with ourselves is how we lead a life that we're happy with. We no longer allow ourselves to do things we don't want to do. We don't worry about those choices because we understand that maintaining balance within ourselves creates the same balance outside of ourselves.

I need to be very clear that this is not a perfect system. We're not aiming for perfection. We're not going to avoid problems or pain. Life is going to continue to happen. We just learn to trust that we can handle it when it does. We know that we have enough awareness and understanding of ourselves to be able to manage whatever happens. We don't worry about things and we don't create fear of the unknown. We simply accept that life will continue and that we can be okay when it does.

The imperfection of this system is what allowed me to go from fear to control. In a perfect world, I would have caught that control thing a while back. In a perfect world, it wouldn't have taken me so long to get to here. But since the world isn't perfect, and since my role is to live life and share what I learn from the experience, I get to learn to allow my experience to be perfectly imperfect. I get to model a way of managing life that isn't painful but is still accepting of the imperfection. Better yet, I get to understand myself within that experience and know that I can be okay within that regardless of what happens.

What's behind my willingness to do all of this? My passion for finding the truth and a very strong level of courage that has been built through the trial and error of my healing journey. Yes, it takes guts to do this, particularly to do it publicly. What helps is that I accept my own imperfection now. I accept the things that I find within myself and I don't argue with them. I don't beat myself up at all. I'm willing to share the learning process because I see it as helpful instead of something to be ashamed of. Learning is nothing to be ashamed of. The teacher inside of me deeply honors that truth. I accept it not just for others, but also for myself. I allow myself to shift not only internally, but also externally. That's important too because otherwise I would be trapped within myself and the external world would still be a dangerous place.

Some of you are there. You've shifted massively within yourselves but you're still trying to keep things together in the external world. It's got you completely trapped and unable to create a reality that honors you within your own experience. This is a fear of the external world. The fear of showing up as yourself has you stopped. The fear of what the world will think keeps you trapped. This is a doorway that you're standing on one side of. The side you're on right now is your old life and your old way of being. You no longer fit this world. It is no longer yours. But that door has never been opened and you have no idea what's on the other side of it so you're afraid to even put your hand on the door knob. The only way you can move is by opening that door. The longer you stand there, the more fear you will feel and the harder it will be. You have to decide when you're ready to make that move, nobody else can do it for you. What are you waiting for?

I can probably guess what you're waiting for. You're waiting for safety which doesn't exist. That's a feeling inside of you not something you create outside of yourself. You're waiting for security. That's also inside of you. When you're secure in yourself it doesn't matter what's happening around you. You're waiting for permission. You won't get it. The world will always be bothered by people that change themselves regardless of why. You're waiting for the pain to go away. It won't until you decide to leave the pain behind. You sit in the pain until you're ready to get out of it. Life doesn't change until you do but have to accept the risk

that comes with creating that change.

It's a risk isn't it? It takes courage to counteract the fear of the unknown. The black hole is what causes the fear. The mind doesn't have anything to put there, so it puts fear there instead. It's your job to recognize that the fear isn't true. It's the mind using only what it knows, which is your past, however painful that may be. A painful past is a reason to stay where you are. Familiar pain is better than unfamiliar pain. Does that sound crazy? If you were in a home that was over-filled with stuff and none of it was yours, you'd hate the experience. If you were in that same home and everything around you was yours, you would be weirdly okay with it. When the things are familiar we aren't bothered by them. But if the things are new then we aren't really sure what to do with them. That's the part that makes us question what we're doing.

Ultimately, the fear is going to be there anyway so at some point you just have to decide to do it. It's risky. It seems scary as hell and the only way you move forward is by trying it. The only way you learn new things is by trying them. The only way you get out of pain and create a new life is by taking the risk to leave the old one behind. You have to risk breaking up with the pain to see what's available to you. The unknown is scary and the regret is scarier. It's just a question of how long it takes you to get there.

CHAPTER FIVE
The Argument

The argument we have with everything we want to do is all the reasons we give ourselves why not. We have a million of them don't we? Let's brainstorm a few of them. Family, friends, money, jobs, obligations, fear, insecurity, hopelessness, powerlessness, time, and failure are all the reasons why we prefer the pain we know to a life that isn't quite so painful.

This just dawned on me. Maybe some of you have the belief that to have a life that isn't quite so painful, it means you have to have a life that is empty or lonely. The reason I say that is that often when you ask people what they really want they tell you they want a beach to drink margaritas on all day. Is that a metaphor for an uncluttered life? Is that a metaphor for freedom? Is that a metaphor for lack of worry? Is there fear there that questions how empty your life would have to be in order for you to not feel all the worry and fear all the time?

This is a story we tell ourselves that says that if we can't get rid of the worries completely, then we might as well just stay where we are because at least we understand what that is. Is the goal really to have a life that is problem and worry free? Nobody actually has that, even though they may try to make you think they do. Everybody has problems, it's just about how we manage them. You see the problems don't have to run your life. They can be there in the background and you can be okay anyway. If you need to have a perfect life to be happy in your life, you're never going to get what you want. You can't. There is no such thing as a perfect life free from worries and problems. It would completely defeat the purpose of the human experience.

We learn to be okay with the problems simply being there and then we figure out how to stop worrying about them. It's the worry that takes away from your ability to enjoy your life, not the problems themselves. Simply learning to not worry would make you feel better almost immediately. We just get taught that it's irresponsible not to worry. The truth is, that's a story and it's not true. You got taught to worry because the people around you worried. If they were worrying that means you needed to as well. It wasn't because the worry solved anything. It was because they didn't know they could do it differently. But you can do it differently

if you want to.

The trick is to question the worry. Is this worry helpful? Is this solving the problem? Is this allowing me to live my life and be okay? Or is it just causing me to struggle and making me miserable? If you can question the worry and get control of the thinking so that the mind doesn't keep going around in circles, the worry will stop and then from there, you can begin to look for solutions. You can't find solutions when you're stuck in worry because you're too focused on the problem with it. The solution comes by pulling your attention away from the problem. To fix a hole in the drywall, you have to go to the store and get the materials you need to fix it. If all you did was stare at the hole, nothing would change. The hole would remain and you would be stuck there indefinitely. Well, guess what? If you focus on the problems in your life that way, you stay stuck in the problems. To create a solution or to patch the hole in the drywall, you have to focus elsewhere. You have to stop staring at the problem long enough to get the supplies to fix it. Maybe you even need to watch a YouTube video or two on how to repair it. This is how we focus on the solutions. Now, is every solution as obvious as this? Not necessarily, but you won't know whether it is or isn't until you take your focus off the problem.

Sometimes we get the fun of admitting that we can't control it and we can't fix it. That's an awesome place to hang out because what you begin to learn is that you have to trust yourself to handle what happens. So, what if you can't fix the hole in the drywall right away? Maybe you don't have money, maybe you don't know how, maybe you just don't have the confidence to try it yourself. Now what? This is where acceptance comes in. We have to accept that the hole might be there for a while. We have to accept that it just is. Can you cover it with something like a picture? Or do you just have to let it be?

When we don't have control and we can't do anything about it, we have to find acceptance of it so that we can continue on with our lives and leave the problem where it is. Focusing on it and worrying about it is not going to fix it faster. We have to be okay with what's happening, with where we are.

The idea of acceptance causes people to get upset. "But I don't want to accept it! I want it to go away." Okay, so now what? This is when you move to arguing with your reality, being mad at what is, complaining that you don't like it, and finding more problems to be mad at. What happens when we start focusing on problems? We find more problems. Do you really want to create more problems in your life? Probably not, but you will if you keep focusing on things you can't do anything about.

Acceptance doesn't require you to like it, it just requires you to stop arguing with it and then focus on finding solutions for it. But as long as you're arguing with it, as long as you're mad at it, you can't get there. You're stuck in the problem. The minute you decide to just allow whatever it is to be there without arguing with it, is the minute you will feel better in your own life. That is how we shift it. That is how we feel better.

I didn't magically create a problem free life. I learned how to be okay in the life I had. I just learned how to accept that there were problems in my life that I couldn't fix or control. My job was not to try to fix them, it was simply to be okay with their

existence. When I stopped worrying about them and I stopped focusing on them, I began to realize that there was actually a solution. It was figuring out what my purpose in life was, what my career was supposed to be, who I was supposed to show up as, and then do more of that. The solution was the work that I wasn't doing because I was too busy focusing on the problems I thought I had to solve.

If you've read my other books or you follow me on social media, you'll know that I use tarot for myself daily. The reason I bring this up here is because my human focus was the bigger goals that I had. I just wanted to pay the bills and recover my power. What tarot has shown me was that there were a lot of smaller goals that I never consciously intended, but that were designed to help me maintain and love the life I wanted to create. One of the goals that came through in my tarot was that I needed to be able to have a connection, a relationship, with my work. My work was supposed to be an extension of me and it is, but in order for that to actually work the way it was intended to, I couldn't disconnect myself from it emotionally or mentally. I had to be fully involved in my work. All the pain behind the unpaid bills never allowed me to connect fully to my work. What I had to learn to do was disconnect from the pain so that I could connect to my work instead. I had to start focusing on the things that didn't cause me to feel pain.

Those hidden goals that we don't necessarily consciously intend are critical to us being able to have the life that we want. There are all kinds of little things that we don't think about and don't see because we're focused so heavily on our physical realities and our human goals. There were many times when I wanted to argue with those smaller goals. "Just give me what I want!" But it doesn't work like that. I had to trust the journey that was being put in front of me. All arguing with it did, was slow the whole thing down.

The goal was for me to be independent, to be able to live freely on my own terms, to not worry about everything, to remove the fear, to connect to my work, to be able to connect with other people and not give my power away, to know when to stand my ground and when to simply let things be, to understand who I was and how to show up in the world and what my work was meant to look like. I didn't have any of those goals consciously, not a one. But I see the importance of them now. Did I want to do them first though? Absolutely not. I wanted the problems to go away but they wouldn't until I became the person I needed to be to solve the problems. The bigger truth is that this whole process that I've been in wasn't just so that I could pay off debt and go back to living in pain. The point was to create a whole new reality for myself. My human goals actually led me to a larger goal of a life that allowed me the freedom that I've wanted for many years but never had the power to create until I started to heal. I wanted to pay off debt and figure the rest out later. Instead, I got to figure it all out at the same time and the debt, even though I tried to control it a lot, was almost a secondary part of the process. The journey was all about me feeling okay within myself. It had nothing to do with what was happening around me. The physical goals were only a catalyst for the bigger journey I was meant to go on.

When I see people stuck in pain my first response is to want to remind them that they have to heal themselves first. They are stuck in pain, complaining about their reality, not wanting to do the work that's being put in front of them, and so

they remain in pain. The work is to heal, not argue with it, not complain about it, but actively heal. Follow the healing breadcrumb trail that shows up in front of you when you begin to do the work and eventually the things that you want will come to you, not because you messed with your reality, but because you healed to make room for what you wanted within yourself.

One of the first things I tell my clients, especially if they have quiet lives when they start working with me, is that life is going to get exciting. Why? Because now the Universe will show them what they need to see. The experiences will be in front of them. Whatever we're talking about is going to show up in their lives. It's not meant to be a bad thing, but the experiences aren't always fun either. The idea is that life will begin to show you what you've refused to see up to then. When you bring that back to me in our sessions, I point out what you're being shown. I get to give you the messages that you can't see for yourself yet. My job is to teach you how to recognize it for yourself so that you don't need me to interpret your life that way. This is what I fondly call becoming aware of yourself within the experience. It is learning how to see the experience in such a way that you can use it to heal yourself instead of just complaining about it.

Once we finally begin to heal and stop arguing with everything, it actually allows us to detach a little bit from our lives and the things going on around us. We're looking to detach from the things that cause us pain so that we can attach to the things that fulfill us or give us joy. Just like in many other areas of our lives, if we want to make room for something new, we have to get rid of the old first. For me, that meant trusting that I didn't have to focus on the debt 24 hours a day. It meant trusting that the problems did not require my attention. When I was able to stop focusing on the problems and trust that they would be fine without my supervision, then I was able to focus on the things that I enjoyed. Being able to connect to the things that gave me joy was actually part of the solution to the pain. The lesson in the end was that I didn't need the pain to go away so that I could be okay. It had more to do with where I was focusing than it did with what was going on around me. By simply changing my focus, I quickly began to feel better even though nothing had changed outside of me.

Your focus causes you to argue with it because you want to be able to turn your attention away from the problem, but you tell yourself you can't until the problem is solved. You believe you have to focus on the problem until it goes away. That's the argument and it keeps you stuck. You have to change your focus first and then, when you're no longer bothered by the problem, the solution will show up. Yes, that's a hard pill to swallow, but if you've watched me for any length of time you'll know that my focus on paying bills or making money did not solve the problem, it just delayed the solution. The same is true for you, regardless of what the problem is.

So, the real question is, what has made us all decide that we need to focus on problems until they go away? Why do we do that? Well, let's start with the emotional attachment we have to our problems. Problems make us feel something other than happy. Immediately when we don't feel good about things, we want to fix them. The emotional response that we have to our problems is part of what makes us focus on them so much. We decide that we want to feel better and we

think that the way to do that is to fix the problem. If I fix the problem I will feel better, but healing doesn't work like that. Healing is not fixing the problem first so that I can change how I feel. Healing is changing how I feel and then the problem will more or less take care of itself.

Outside of our emotional response to problems we also have a mental response to problems. The brain is hardwired to focus on problems. It loves a good problem to solve and so it will stay there until it can find a solution. These are what I call thought loops. We go around and around the problem in our heads making up a story about the problem the whole way. That story helps to feed the emotional attachment we just talked about. The brain wants to keep you stuck on that problem, whether you have a reasonable solution or not. Have you ever noticed that even if you solve the problem, the brain still brings it up for the next two weeks? When we don't have a solution to the problem, the mind will go on ad nauseam because it can't let the problem go without fixing it first. This is the fun of the brain. Yes, you can get control over this.

When the mind wants to go off on one of its many tangents or it won't let go of a problem, it is okay to tell your brain to f*ck off! The reason it keeps going is because you are playing along with it in some way. When you stop acknowledging the mind, the mind stops talking about that thing. You see, the mind needs an audience and you're it. Not only are you the audience, you're a captive one at that. The mind doesn't have anybody else to talk to, so you're it! And guess what? When you stop responding the mind will find something else to talk about that you will respond to.

When you first start training yourself to not buy into the racing thoughts in your head, your mind will actually talk louder for a while. Your job is just to keep ignoring it. You don't need to have a racing mind if you can learn how to train it to do its job and not take over the whole show. The way you do that is by not responding to your thinking anymore. Take the audience away from your mind.

Your mind is a super useful tool for you because it helps you navigate the practical world. It make sure you don't get yourself killed on a daily basis. It keeps your heart beating and your lungs pumping oxygen to the rest of your body. Those things are quite useful to you. What isn't useful is the constant chatter and that's what you need to get control over. You do that by no longer engaging with your mind unconsciously. Only interact with your mind when you need something from it, otherwise, just let it do its job of running your body for you.

The constant chatter helps make sure you stay in the argument. It's what creates the story you tell about all the problems you have, and the reason you can't do what you want. It's busy blaming your mother for your life, even though you're 50 and haven't lived with her for 30 years. These are the things that your mind does because it doesn't like to focus on the unknown. For your mind, tomorrow is unknown, heck 5-minutes from now is unknown. Because of that, your mind will naturally go back to what it knows, either the present or the past. The thing with the present is that most of the time it's rather boring so your mind doesn't like to focus there because there is nothing to do. The past is far more interesting. It can conjure up all kinds of good stories to remind you of, and most of the time your mind picks the painful memories. This helps you maintain the argument with

everything you want to do in your life.

Permission is another reason why we argue with ourselves. We don't give ourselves permission to change not only our external worlds, but also ourselves. When I had my "awakening" years ago, I went into a complete meltdown. At one point during that experience I ended up using Google to research religions. I had given up my childhood religion, Roman Catholicism, 20 years earlier and I no longer believed in the things that I had been taught to believe in growing up. My belief system essentially fell apart when I "woke up". I don't really like those terms which is I put them in quotation marks but since I don't have other terms to use, I'll use those and just hope you understand what I mean. The problem was that I didn't have anything to replace them with, so I went looking.

I started with what we call "Western Religions" which basically amounted to Christianity and Judaism. I didn't find anything there that made sense. It was more of the same. Then I moved onto Eastern Religions, specifically Muslim and then Buddhism. If you've ever searched up Buddhism yourself, you'll know that you pretty much fall right into spirituality when you do that search. There are a great many spiritual beliefs that tie into Buddhism.

Spirituality attracted me quickly, first because it wasn't an organized religion, and second because it offered me a buffet menu of beliefs that at least to start with, I could pick and choose from. It goes without saying that the beliefs and things that I ran into made sense to me. Because they made sense to me I began to look more into this concept of spirituality. I started to find teachers like Abraham-Hicks, Wayne Dyer, Eckhart Tolle, and Deepak Chopra. Eckhart Tolle's book, The Power of Now, was life-changing because it focused me into the present and gave me permission to do the work on myself. Weirdly enough, although it wasn't Tolle's intention with the book, he made it okay to leave relationships behind if I needed to. He made healing possible for me.

The beliefs that I started to take on were giving me permission to do the work for myself. They gave me permission to change my beliefs in the first place. They viewed God as not just a white guy in the sky that was mad at everything he had created, but actually an omnipotent being that unconditionally loved what had been created. God was suddenly supportive of the human experience and encouraged us to heal. That was much different from my experience going to church growing up.

The idea that the human journey had a purpose that wasn't just to be punished or to pay bills and die, meant that I had to understand myself and do the work on myself if I was to change anything. I had to make my experience about me. It seemed a little selfish at the time, as healing often does at the beginning. But what I quickly realized was that it wasn't selfish, it was necessary and that it would ultimately enable me to give more back instead of less. When I got to a point in my journey where I was reasonably okay within myself, I was able to give back more in better ways. As I became healthier so did my relationships with the people around me.

For a while though, I was really hard to live with because of all the stuff I was working through. I wanted lots of separation and down time. I was mad at my

reality because it didn't give me the space I wanted. Through that I learned to be okay with my reality. I learned to accept my what is as it was. I learned how to do this even while things were happening around me. That was an extremely valuable lesson because now I can heal anytime anywhere pretty much. I'm not so tied up in my reality anymore that I can't heal in the quiet spaces that I do get.

All of this work forced me to create new boundaries in my relationships. I began to understand that I was not my relationships and that I could be separate from those people. I could have separate opinions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and still maintain the relationships. It gave me permission to use my own voice. It gave me permission to be who I was without being afraid of either tension or losing the relationships entirely.

Lots of people have to work through that exact thing, the worry about what other people are thinking. By understanding that you are not your relationships and that you will be okay with or without those relationships, you can start to allow yourself your own space. Creating that space is what gives you the room to heal yourself within the relationship. The co-dependency or the feeling that you can't change anything because the relationship will simply vanish, is what keeps you from healing. If you believe that the changes you are making within yourself will trigger the other person and they will walk away, then you won't move. Are you sacrificing yourself to maintain a relationship you think you can't live without?

People do that all the time, by the way. They completely stunt their own growth to keep the relationship intact. They won't change beyond what they think the other person can handle. I've caught myself in this too. I've been afraid of whether people will accept the whole package or whether I'm now "too much" for people because I've taken back my power and done things that most people never get the courage to do. I've completely changed my life in the best way possible. That means that I'm an entirely different person. Is it okay for me to change? Will they accept that change?

I've confronted that fear more than once actually. The first time it came up I gave in, I capitulated and put my power away. I made everybody around me comfortable. That was when the trauma began for me. I put my power away, I walked away from everything I wanted, and created a miserable existence for myself. I lived in that miserable existence knowingly and unknowingly for over 25 years. When I had my "awakening" crash, that was when I began to shift back the other way so that I could create a life I actually wanted. By doing that, I confronted the fear of losing people once again, but differently this time because I had to come to accept that people were just going to do their own thing and that I could be okay with that. If they liked it fine, if they didn't fine, but I couldn't keep staying in pain just to avoid rocking the proverbial boat. I had to shift it. The truth is I would have killed myself by now if I hadn't. I was just simply that miserable. Awakening for me was survival as much as it was anything else.

CHAPTER SIX
Time is An Illusion

Author's Note: I didn't plan to write a whole chapter on this concept of time within this book. That wasn't the goal or the purpose of the book. But as I wrote this section that was meant to be part of the previous chapter and it got longer and longer, I realized how important understanding the concept was to being able to live your life without being stressed out about a perceived lack of time. So, enjoy my perspective on time and the argument that we have with it.

Time is one of the biggest arguments we have in life because most of us feel like we don't have enough time to do all the things we want to do. But what if that whole thing is just an illusion? Let's spend some time (pun intended) talking about time so that we're all on the same page.

Time is a human construct and a perception that is actually an illusion. We have the perception of past, present, and future time. We see events as happening chronologically throughout our lives and this helps us perceive these ideas of past, present, and future. These perceptions are how and why humans have created this concept of time using both the sun and the moon to create calendars and even clocks to track time. These perceptions aren't necessarily true though, and that's where the whole thing gets a lot more fun. There are whole books written about these ideas, so what I'm about to explain in a few paragraphs is barely scratching the surface of what's available on this subject if you wish to explore it.

All events in the Universe happen simultaneously. There is nothing before or after anything else. We have what are called timelines that we can use to explain this idea in a simplified way. Timelines are the concurrence of events. There is a version of you out there right now living every experience you've ever had, could have had, or will have in your entire life. There is a version of you out there on some timeline living every dream you've ever had. There are timelines where you are in relationships with your exes. There are timelines where you have children you don't currently have. There are timelines that have already ended because you died earlier on in your experience. All of the possibilities for your life exist on some timeline somewhere.

Your life appears to you to be chronological but it's not. You actually go all over

the place because you jump timelines all the time. Every time you heal something, change something, get a new idea, go somewhere, or do anything, you jump timelines. Healing is actually allowing you to jump to timelines you prefer. That's really all we're doing in life. We simply decide what we would want in our lives and we heal to make ourselves an energetic match to the timeline we want to be on. The life you want already exists. You just have to match up to it energetically and you do that by healing. That's why your energy (thoughts, feelings, and words) is so important.

From our limited human perspective though, the bill is due on Friday. You're exhausted when you get home from the job you don't like and so you tune out and watch Netflix instead of working on your passions. The weekends go too quickly, you don't have enough holiday time and so life seems to slip by without you moving forward with the things you want to do. What this creates is unhappiness and stress. Every single one of us experiences this in some way at some point in our lives.

The perception of time makes you worry about things and try to fix them. That worry keeps you unhappy and focused on problems because you believe you only have a limited amount of time to solve those problems. What if this stuff isn't necessarily true? What if your perception of time is simply keeping you stuck, going around in circles, preventing you from moving forward?

The lack story I told meant I was on a hamster wheel trying to fix money problems I didn't have control over. Because of the perception of never having enough time to get the money I needed to keep the bills paid, I was stressed out and exhausted constantly.

At one point in this process I had to let all those financial balls drop. I simply couldn't stay on the hamster wheel so I got off. What does that look like in the world of money? It looks like all of my bills going to collection agencies and my phone suddenly ringing dozens of times a day. That was just the practical reality of suddenly dropping all the balls. The thing was, I had to drop them so that I could see clearly where I was and how I'd gotten there. I needed to figure out what I was actually juggling and then understand what the choices were to manage those things.

For the longest time I did nothing. I just ignored the whole thing. Why? Because I needed to deal with the fear that surrounded it first. I needed to deal with the insecurity that I felt. I needed to be able to manage myself to manage my finances and that took a while.

My perception of time meant that I was afraid to drop the balls. What would happen if I didn't pay that thing? My fear of time kept me stuck more than the actual bills or money ever did. It wasn't the bills that were the problem. It was my perception of time in relation to those bills that was the problem. When I stopped being afraid of time, the fear went away. I realized I could be okay regardless of what was happening.

As I healed and changed my perspective, I realized that my energy behind what was happening was critical to what happened. I had to be okay within myself if I wanted things to change. It didn't matter whether it was the money story, my

powerlessness, or something else, how I felt within myself was the only thing that mattered. Everything I wanted would come from within me when I healed myself.

Why does it work that way? Because how I feel determines the timeline I end up on. When I dropped the balls I jumped timelines and it put me on a new path. That path was the one that taught me to heal and stop being so afraid of my life. As I've healed, I've continued to jump timelines, creating different realities as I go along.

This is also what makes instant manifestation possible. When you're an energetic match to what you want, you just jump right over to where you want to be. That's instant manifestation 101. It's just timeline hopping. The more you can energetically line up while allowing your reality to change with you (this is the hard part), the quicker you're going to jump into a whole new world (Where's Aladdin when you need him?).

The trouble people have is that they don't allow reality to move very fast. They don't allow those shifts. They are scared of the unknown. They are worried about time. They don't like change and so they keep themselves where they are. What they are actually doing when they keep themselves stuck is preventing themselves from jumping to the new timeline they really want to be on.

Don't get me wrong, we all do this. This is life. It's just a new way of seeing it that removes the perception of time. When you just see life as a bunch of timelines that you jump around on, life gets easier in some ways. You're no longer worried about time and change no longer seems so scary. It's easier to allow life to happen when you see it this way.

When you see your past as just a set of different timelines, what you can recognize is that it won't happen the same way twice. If you're on a new timeline it won't happen again anyway. If you go back to revisit an old timeline, you won't handle it the same way because you're not the same person. Think about it for a second. If you were to go visit some place from your childhood as an adult, would it feel the same to you as it did then? If I gave you a swing made for a baby, would you get as excited as the baby does about it? Would you even fit in it? Revisiting old places in our lives doesn't mean we have to see or experience those old places in the same we used to. We can revisit the old place and see it or experience it completely differently. That's how timelines work.

It means you can go back to your ex and have an entirely different experience of them. They don't have to be the same person. You don't have to be the same person. You can create an entirely new relationship on an entirely different timeline with them if you want to.

Your ex is part of a timeline that you were on for a while. When you separated from each other you both went off on your own timelines. If you decide to come back together, you're either going to jump onto an entirely new timeline because both of you have changed, or you're going to pick up where you left off on the old timeline. You went back to where you were. It's not a straight line the way we want to believe it is.

The reason society will tell you not to go back to your ex is because most people don't actually do the work on themselves so they just end up back on old timelines. This isn't actually a bad thing. You just have to be willing to see it for what it is.

You're revisiting an old place so you can pick up a lesson you didn't catch the first time. Once you pick up that lesson, you'll jump to a new timeline and never go back to the old one again.

There is no risk to moving around and changing things when you see it as just jumping timelines. You're always going to end up somewhere. You can't fall into a black hole. Your job is to simply look around, figure out where you are, and then decide what to do next. That's it.

You argue with time because of your perception of it, not because there is actually anything to argue with. You're arguing with a human construct that is an illusion and using that as your excuse to stay in pain. Why? Because the human illusion creates the perception of limits and constraints. It's intentional. There is method to the madness, as they say. Those human limitations, of which there are many, give us a kind of structure to create within. They give us boundaries so that we can learn about ourselves and the world around us. Was it a form of control? Maybe. But why victimize yourself that way? You have the ability to see it differently and free yourself. Making time a weapon to beat yourself up with some more for not seeing it sooner just keeps you in pain longer.

Once you become energetically aware of yourself, sometimes you'll actually feel the timeline shifts. It's fun when you can become aware of the timeline jumps because then you start to realize what's happening, what you're there to do, and what the next move is. It actually makes life easier in some ways, although it can be a little disconcerting for some. Being aware of the timeline jumps gives the whole thing purpose. You start to see that you're just visiting or that you have a very specific purpose in that place, and then you're not as attached to that timeline. You don't unpack and live there. You allow yourself to pass through. There is benefit to that because it allows you to just have experiences and not worry so much about outcomes or time or anything. It frees you to just live your life by removing a lot of the perceived constraints that you've held on to.

For some as they heal and stop living like the rest of society does, they lose their sense of time. That's the disconnection from reality in a sense, but it's not a bad thing. We see loss of time as a bad thing because we perceive it to be finite, which it's not. So when you lose an hour or five, you start realize that it's just timeline hopping. I call them milk runs for the spirit. We aren't attached to our physical forms. We are spirits in the physical forms and our spirits can and do move freely without lugging the human form around. No, the human form doesn't have to die for that to happen. It actually happens regularly. You call it dreaming. For some of us though, it happens while awake too. That loss of time that you perceive is your spirit moving around without your physical form.

It's actually quite a strange thing when it happens because your physical form is suddenly on its' own and left to its own devices. Some of the awareness goes away and what happens is we basically don't remember what we did and didn't do. This happened to me one time when we lived in a big apartment building and I was making my way upstairs from the garage below the building. I don't remember getting back to my apartment. I was totally unaware of myself in that moment. My human self got to where she needed to go safely, but without the spirit offering awareness. Whatever my spirit needed to do, it did without the aid of my human

form and then quickly returned. To this day, I still have no awareness of that trip up the stairs.

The other thing that some of us can experience is the gaining of time. When you say you need more time for whatever you're working on, you have the power to slow time down to give you what you need to finish your work. You can do what you need to do in the time allotted when you simply learn that the illusion of time is under your control to some degree. This also happens when you think it's later in the day than it actually is. Bending time is possible. We can both collapse time and extend it, depending on what we need. People talk about the concept of collapsing time when they speed up the manifestation process. We can talk about extending time when we get things done in shorter periods of time than we think they should take.

The argument with time comes because we believe we don't have control over time and that our time is finite. Time is infinite to your soul. There is always enough time for everything from a soul perspective. Human forms and egos are temporary things. What the ego does is that because it known it is temporary, it projects it's temporary nature onto the world around it. This helps to create the illusion of time that we perceive.

Because the soul is infinite in all ways, when you argue about time in terms of not having enough time to do things, the whole process slows down. You begin to create your own problem. It becomes a little bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy because you don't see what you're creating. You've decided you don't have time and then you create a million distractions for yourself so that you truly don't have time. If you simply juggled your priorities and stopped taking on things that weren't yours, you would find the time. This has shown up in my life.

Writing books fell into the trap of not enough time for me. Why? Because I had money issues that were more pressing. The deadline was 48-hours away and I had to fix that before I could focus on the bigger picture things like writing books that would take weeks or months to do. What would happen is that my life would continue to distract me from writing books by creating this sense of urgency around money, hence creating the lack of time that I felt. If I was always distracted by a problem, I would never have enough time to write a book.

It's not that I never wrote a book. I did! I wrote nine of them actually! But they were very short and written very quickly in the span of a couple of weeks or a month. My mad typing skills mean that I can move very quickly and write 2000 words in two or three hours. If I wrote books that were only 60 000 words or so, I could do it in 30 to 60 hours. I could cram that into a week or two with enough pushing. I got books out by finding a couple of weeks where I had some space between problems to quickly write a few thousand words and publish them. That was how books were created.

It was limiting though because I didn't think I had the time to write anything longer. I didn't think I could afford (literally) to put more time into writing something longer or more detailed. Here's the thing with the problems, they didn't resolve. I wasn't actually able to fix anything, they were simply a distraction from

what I wanted to be doing. What I ended up learning was that the time didn't matter. The problem wasn't going to get resolved anyway, so I might as well just do what I wanted. The obvious answer is that the books and the writing that I wanted to do were the solution to the problem in the first place. I was avoiding the solution by spending my time staring at the problem. Sound familiar?

The illusion of deadlines and problems kept me from being able to just accept what I wanted to be doing and the way I wanted to be doing it. I don't focus on problems the same way so I allowed myself to create more, but I was still trying to gain some sense of control, so I just changed what I was doing. Courses were my form of control. They allowed me to write and share in manageable chunks. I would write workbooks and sell those directly from my website. I still had a book going in the background the whole time. The book I was trying to write was this one. There are about 12 other versions of it on my laptop right now. But once again, I was getting distracted by trying to gain control over the problems and instead tried to create shorter content that I could sell quicker.

The thing with Amazon is that royalty payments are two months behind. That means if I sell books in July, I don't see the royalties for those sales until October. Well, when you have bills due in August and September, royalty payments in October don't help. Do you see how my perception of time was affecting me? I can't publish a book or put time into a book that I can't get the money from for two months. I need the money now so I can't write the book right now.

Once again, those problems weren't going to get resolved. I might as well have just put the effort into the book because the courses never did what I thought I needed them to do anyway. My energy was all messed up. I still had things to work on within myself before I could be successful with any of it. Truth be told, I had to change my goal entirely before I could shift it.

I had to put the focus on doing what I wanted instead of where it was, which was on solving problems. Doing what I wanted was the solution but the skewed sense of time and deadlines meant I wouldn't allow myself to work on the solution. It's not that the book is going to be a best-seller and solve all the problems. That's not what it's about. By unlocking myself to just do what I wanted to, I was able to drop course writing which I wasn't overly happy with anyway, and focus on what I wanted to do, which was write and share. I wanted to just simply talk about things in different ways. The model that I've had in my head for this business was that the content would actually be free and the only things that I would charge for would be my time (coaching) and my books. There would be nothing hidden, there would be no secret formula, I wouldn't have to think about what I was sharing in terms of there being a line between free and paid content. I would be completely free to share whatever I wanted in whatever way I wanted to and be fully supported in doing that through a combination of coaching and book sales.

> It's just me, your friendly neighborhood writer popping in before you move onto the next paragraph because things have changed since I wrote this. I wanted to leave it in as it because I felt it was important for you to see the progression of the journey

> I've been on. I do exactly what I want now including speaking, writing, the podcast, and blogging, and yes, it took me a long time to get there, but I did. So go ahead and read on, but pay attention to how things have already shifted from when I wrote this only a few days earlier.

My ultimate goal is writing and speaking. The speaking gigs will come, but I had to unlock this first step in this process and that meant getting out of my own way and not focusing on trying to solve problems. I had to get okay with the content creation portion of my work and that meant knowing that I could create the space in my life to just write and share. The problems were always going to be there in some form, so I had to learn to not be so distracted by them, and that's what I've done for myself. I now just get to sit and enjoy. I write regular blogs, I post in my group, I do my podcast, I write a book in the background, work with other people too, and I love my work. That took a long time to get to.

My argument with it all the way through was the perception of time and a lack of it. Problems often come with a deadline and a sense of impending doom. That's what helps us feel like we need to focus so intently on them. What if that isn't true though? What if the argument of time is more of a distraction than a reality? What if the solutions come through taking your attention away from the problems?

We make time the enemy because we need something to blame. It's a story we tell. What's better than blaming a deadline or the clock? It's almost as good as blaming a planet being in retrograde for what's going on in your life. Time and planets are energies that we take on. They aren't good or bad, they are simply there and it is what we do with them that matters. I don't get to sit and write all day no matter what I do. There are interruptions, life continues to happen, and I don't get to do as much in a day as I would if I had hours and hours of uninterrupted time. That was one of the arguments that I used to have. I blamed my lack of time for my inability to be successful in my work. That resulted in me just being angry at my reality constantly. I had to let the argument go. I couldn't solve it. I had to learn to be okay in the environment that I was in. Blaming the clock or my reality was just a story that kept me stuck. It served no purpose other than to keep me going around in a cycle of continued pain and failure. Until I let that go, I stayed unhappy. Chances are, you will stay in pain too until you let the argument with time or lack of it go completely.

This all leads back to the chapter on acceptance. Are you willing to accept things as they are? When we talk about acceptance, it doesn't mean give in or give up. It means stop arguing with it so that you can find solutions and create the things that you want. What do you want? Are you willing to accept where you are for right now so that you can build what you want?

Okay, so you don't have the fancy car, but you have a car. You have a car that runs. It gets you from A to B. It's not what you want but it's better than nothing. Can you be okay there? Or are you going to get in your car and argue with it every single day? Are you going to be mad at your car? Are you going to complain about

it? Or can you find a way to simply be grateful that you're not taking the bus or walking? That is what acceptance looks like, regardless of the situation or scenario.

The argument with it is what keeps you going around in circles. When you can learn to simply accept or in this case drop the argument, then you can focus on what you want to create. It frees up the space within yourself to bring in something new. Being happy with getting a couple of hours of uninterrupted time in a day means I don't spend those two hours arguing about the time I don't have. That's important because now I can focus on doing the work that is the solution to some of the problems. It gives me freedom and bandwidth within myself to focus differently because without that I don't move, I simply stay stuck.

Where are you stuck in your argument with time or problems?

How can you shift that so that you can focus differently and free yourself to begin moving forward?

CHAPTER SEVEN
Questioning the Experience

Questioning the experience requires us to be aware of ourselves within the experience. Are you aware of what's happening in your life without the story of it? Can you drop the story long enough to become aware of yourself? The process of awareness is one that takes time. It doesn't happen overnight and it doesn't solve or prevent problems either. It simply allows us to handle life a little easier.

My favorite thing to tell people is to focus on the thing that screams the loudest first. Why? Because it's the thing you're most aware of. It's the thing your brain probably has on replay anyway. It's the thing you're most interested in solving or getting rid of. It's the easiest thing to focus on because it's so prominent and prevalent in your life right now. That makes it the simplest thing to use to become aware of what's happening in your mind in relation to this scenario. So, how do you do that?

Eavesdrop on your own thoughts. Pay attention to what your mind is spitting at you about this particular thing. When your mind wants to replay the scenario, tune in because that's when you're going to see that your mind is just making stuff up. Let's use an example because that's probably the easiest way to do this. If you've had an argument with a friend or family member and that conversation is playing on repeat in your head there is an opportunity there for your mind to add things into the story. What does it add?

It adds assumptions about what the other person was thinking or feeling. It adds projections into the future about what might happen the next time you see or talk to them. It adds drama by reading between the lines and inferring things that aren't there. It adds emotion because it makes you judge what happened and what was said. The emotion sends you off in a whole different direction, potentially adding your own trauma to the story. It adds the past by remembering the last time this person did this, again injecting pain and trauma into the memory of the conversation.

What's the truth behind the argument? Only that which was said, nothing else. Everything else is you adding in previous trauma (your own and theirs), emotion, pain, assumptions, and projections. You create all the extras yourself. They aren't in

the original conversation. You just put them there completely unconsciously. You didn't even think about it. These things are all the story of the mind because the only truth is the conversation itself. What do you do with that?

First, take everything at face value without bringing the past in, your own trauma in, any assumptions in, or anything else you might want to bring in. Just leave things as they are without rearranging them. Disconnect from the pain you want to bring in because it's not helping you. When you take things at face value, what does that do to the emotion you feel? It probably removes most of it. There may still be some pain there if insults were thrown around, but now we have a new opportunity. By taking out all that stuff, you can see the insults clearly. They are a projection of pain by the other person and nothing more. That person may never change their behavior. This is particularly true if you've gone in circles with this person and had similar conversations multiple times. Can you recognize they aren't going to change and they are simply throwing around their pain? That removes the majority of the story you're telling.

Now you can make a logical choice about what to do with this relationship. When relationships are harmful like this, we don't have to stay in them. We can also limit them severely to keep the number of harmful conversations to a minimum. Can you re-configure boundaries? Can you just cut the person off? What is your power over yourself within that relationship? Take control of the thing you have control over, yourself and then make choices that honor you.

That was a simple example and probably a relevant one for a lot of you. It's not about the conversation because you can't change that. It's not about the other person because you can't change them either. It's what you do with it in your head that matters. The brain loves to make things up. It loves to add in all kinds of clutter so that you get tied up in it. What's really happening is that the ego is just trying to defend you. The thing is, there is nothing to defend. There's no reason to get caught up in it because you can't change it once it's happened. The past is exactly that, it's the past. The minute those words are said, they can't be undone. They just are. So your argument in your head with something you don't have control over is just upsetting you. You're spinning in it for no reason, and not only are you spinning in it, you're probably creating some story about how you're a victim of it, and that's not true either. You are causing your own pain by what you allow to run through your mind after something happens.

Questioning this type of thinking is what allows you to free yourself from the pain. It will actually keep you from being in pain in the first place because you're no longer going to make up the story about why you're a victim of what the other person said. When you stop making yourself a victim of the pain other people throw around, then you can free yourself to be okay in your own experience. Your need to control what everybody else is saying and doing is what keeps you from enjoying your life. Can you learn to leave people where they are? Can you learn to accept that other people will throw their pain around, that it is not yours and that you are not a victim of it?

Taking responsibility for ourselves is hard and it will shift how you see what happens in the world. I want to share with you how I see things and how that's changed over time as I've learned to take responsibility for my own thoughts and

feelings. These are hard truths that I've come to and they may not sit well with everybody. If you can open up your mind and not defend the problem, you may begin to see these things for yourself.

Words are energy. Words cause harm only because of what people do with them in their minds when they receive them. I spent many years being told that I wasn't good enough and indirectly, that I needed to not be so powerful. Everything that happened after that is my own doing. I created my own pain. The people that said those things to me were tossing their pain around. I picked it up and took it on. That isn't their fault, that is my doing. It is my responsibility. To say that they shouldn't have said those things takes my power away from me. It puts the control outside of me. It creates a story of victimization that is not true. The truth is they can say whatever they want. It is up to me what I do with that. The victimization that gets created is only me victimizing myself. Their words have no power over me unless I give it to them, which I did freely for many years. To stop doing that meant I had to understand that I didn't have control and that I could still be okay regardless.

Taking my power back meant no longer victimizing myself with what was said and done to me as a child. It meant fully taking responsibility for my response to what had happened. That's why it's so important that we let people off the hook and stop blaming each other for how we feel. Abraham-Hicks probably says it best, "nobody can inject anything into your experience". What other people do is they put things in front of you like a buffet you get to decide what to do with what shows up.

When you go to a buffet in a restaurant, do you feel the need to take a bit of everything that's in front of you? Probably not. There are probably some things in the buffet you don't even like. Do you victimize yourself with that? Do you complain to the manager that they shouldn't put out food people might not like? Do you storm out of the restaurant angry and post on Yelp about how they had things in the buffet that you didn't like? Does that sound crazy? Of course it does. But we do this with what other people are doing and saying. This is how we act when other people say and do things we don't like. Instead of treating the world like a buffet that we get to pick and choose from, we try to take one of everything and then complain about the things we pick up that we don't like. What if you just stopped picking up everything? What if you just decided to only take on what you could control? What if you left the rest alone?

Life is going to be filled with things you don't like and maybe even things you would like to see change. Maybe that potato salad recipe at the restaurant sucks and you wish they'd get a new recipe. What do you do about that? Do you victimize yourself with it? Or do you simply accept that you don't like the potato salad there and you just go somewhere else for your potato salad?

There is nothing wrong with wanting change in the world. Change is how we evolve. Change is how we learn and grow. Change, even though people are terrified of it, is actually a good thing. The fear of change comes from the victimization we feel around it. We make ourselves victims of our own realities and then wonder why we are unhappy all the time. What if you're not a victim? What if you're actually just victimizing yourself through the stories you tell yourself about what's

going on? What if that change you're so scared of would actually allow you to see the truth of the situation that you've found yourself in? Would you allow the change then?

Questioning the story is how we stop the blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. The story is what creates those things, not what actually happened in reality. The reality just is. It's entirely about what you do with it in your head. The problem we have is that people do all kinds of crazy stuff with it in their minds. You do crazy stuff with it in your mind and that's why you're sitting there reading this. I did crazy stuff with it in my mind and that's why I ended up writing this. I had to get to the understanding that taking my power back wasn't about controlling the people in the outside world, it was about controlling and understanding myself within the experience. It meant taking responsibility for myself in a way that most people are uncomfortable with. When you can no longer make yourself a victim of your own reality, it forces you to see things very, very differently. It created some hard truths for me that I had to get okay with. Figuring out how to share them with you is part of that experience. My work is to share even the hard truths, with you in hopes that you can use them to stop victimizing yourself. Is that easy? Hell no, but it's necessary. The more people that can read and understand these things, the less time we spend trying to control each other.

When you look at the news and you get beyond the violence and the chaos, what you see is a persistent tug-of-war. The tug-of-war is in trying to determine where one person starts and another stops. The tug-of-war right now looks very much like they are trying to decide whose rights are more important. That's a war we can't win or create any balance within. We just keep going back and forth, hence the tug-of-war. The solution is actually to realize that everybody's rights are equal and that what one person is doing does not affect everybody else. What we are seeing is the need to leave people where they are without any form of control over what they are doing or not doing. When we understand that we don't have to be so bothered by what others are doing that's what gives us the freedom to live our lives as individuals.

Yes, we all come from the same pot of stardust. At the soul level each one of us is the same. In human forms, we are separate and we perceive that separation. It doesn't have to be a bad thing. It is what allows for individual exploration and expansion. It was meant to be this way. The polarity that is created when we perceive separation but also understand the connection can cause us to struggle with how to function while in human bodies. My take on this is simple. If we can respect individuality while compassionately honoring the soul connection between us we can learn to accept the differences we see in each other.

It is the injection of compassion into our experience that allows us to question the story we see playing out in front of us. It comes back to this idea of recognizing the pain in other people. People are taught to throw their pain around. They insult each other, they hurt each other intentionally, they go out of their way to make others miserable, and they cause harm to each other. All those things that we see happen in our world come from pain. We know from experience that pain creates more pain. If I'm in pain then you need to be in pain too. That's why so many people project their pain outward. If we can learn to step back from what's

happening and not just simply judge it as awful or evil, then we can begin to recognize the pain that is all around us. It is the recognition of pain that allows for compassion. Compassion is what will help everybody to begin to heal.

If we see pain or people throw pain at us, we want to immediately defend ourselves. We want to tell a story about the pain and we want to make ourselves a victim of it. That's what humans do. That's what we've been taught to do because that's what our parents and caregivers did. What if our job is to stop that cycle of projecting pain? What if our job is begin to show compassion to the world around us instead of just reacting and lashing out with more pain?

I'm not even going to pretend that it's easy to do that, because it's not. It is so ingrained in us to perceive pain and throw pain back, that it requires conscious effort and awareness to be able to change the cycle. We have to change the cycle though because what we're doing right now isn't working. The division between us is only increasing, with that so does the pain level. Most of the things that are causing division are just stories that people tell themselves. They are stories of fear and lack because they believe that so much of our world is finite, black and white, right and wrong, good and bad, that they don't see all the gray area in between the polarities. They don't see the possibilities. They only see the extremes.

Why do they work in extremes? Because our 3D reality has been based on that for a long time. They have been taught to believe that there is only one way to be and live in the world. The only right way according to them, is their way, but that's a story that isn't true. These stores are based in fear which might be a fear of punishment, fear of being alone, fear of not having anything, or just a simple fear of the unknown. Those fears are what keep people from changing the story they tell themselves. This is true of everybody that is stuck or feels trapped in a life they aren't happy with. It's true of anyone that tries to keep everything under control. It's true of everybody in one way or another. It's just a matter of whether we're willing to see it and do something about it or not.

I ended up in a lot of pain. Through my "awakening" I tossed out most of the old beliefs that I had around how life was supposed to look, but I didn't have anything to replace them with. That's when I discovered this concept of spirituality which helped me understand the power that I had over myself and my life. To do all this work on myself though, I was guided to learn how to question what was happening around me. I call this awareness. It's the ability to see the experience without the filter of the ego that wants to defend us from that same reality.

Questioning the story meant seeing what was happening without the drama my human ego wanted to inject into what had happened, and then allowing myself the opportunity to find the truth in what I was seeing. The truth wasn't the blame, shame, guilt, and victimization the ego wanted to add in. The truth was that other people were in pain or that my response was based in some form of people-pleasing or powerlessness. I had to learn how to make different choices, how to respond differently to people, and how to see other people's pain more clearly. That wasn't an easy process. It took a lot of work because I had to be willing to drop my judgment of what was happening.

Let's be clear about what judgment is. Judgment is something the human mind and ego do. They see a situation and they immediately, often unconsciously and usually based on previous experiences, decide what to think and how to feel about what's happening. More often than not we don't even get a word in edgewise, the mind simply does its thing before we even have the opportunity to override it. The trick in those scenarios is to become aware of what's happening as soon as you can, even if it's after the thing has already happened. The idea is that by recognizing that the mind jumped to judgment, we can then begin to question that judgment. Where did it come from? Why do I think that? Most importantly, what's the story I'm telling about what happened that created the judgment?

The story is usually an old wound or some trigger we haven't dealt with yet. That story is connected to a pattern or habit we have that we created from pain. Now our experience is showing us something about ourselves because we're seeing a habit or pattern of response to a specific thing in our reality, and now we get to decide whether that pattern is helpful to us or not. Even if the situation is already over, it's still helpful to come back and look at the habit of response we had to the situation. The reason is that we can ask the Universe for help in changing our behavior.

The minute we start to question our patterns and habits of behavior, the Universe will gladly pitch in and offer you lots of opportunities to change those patterns and behaviors. So if you use your experience to recognize that you have a behavior that needs to change, you'll immediately get more opportunities to change it. It doesn't matter that you didn't do it the first time, it will show up again tomorrow and give you another opportunity to do the work. That's how we can use the magic of the Universe to help ourselves heal. When you question the story and you decide you need to correct your behavior, you're going to get the opportunity to do it. That's how the last 7 or 8 years of my life have been. I've been constant opportunities to continually correct patterns and behaviors that don't work for me anymore.

There's a second piece here though, because not only will you get the opportunity to try again, you'll also get the opportunity to own previous behaviors. That's important, because this is how we take full responsibility for ourselves. It might mean having another conversation. It might mean making a different choice. It might mean apologizing for our behaviors. It might mean self-correcting. It might mean simply healing ourselves. It can mean lots of different things depending on what's happening. The goal here is that by fully owning our behavior, thoughts, and feelings without any blame, shame, guilt, or victimization, we begin to become more responsible for how we see the world around us. The world doesn't have to affect us, we let it determine how we feel, what we think, and what we do more often than not. Awareness means we stop doing that to ourselves. We stop allowing ourselves to be at the mercy of our realities. We train ourselves by using awareness to decide what to feel, think, and do about everything that happens around us. One hundred percent of everything we think, feel, say, and do is our choice.

This is a hard reality. It's one of the more difficult realizations that we come to on our journey. It means we have to separate ourselves from what we see going on

around us. We have to decide what to pick up and what to do with what we pick up. Back in early 2020 I wrote a very short little book called, If It's Not Yours Don't Pick it Up. The whole premise of that little book was to begin to discern what we had control over and what we didn't. The job was to begin to decide whether it was worth our energy and what we could do about it if we put our energy into it. Do we have control? Can I change this? What is my responsibility here, if anything?

There is a story behind this as it relates to world events because we are taught that it is irresponsible to not pay attention to the news or to not take on a cause or ten. But what if that's a story? What if we don't have to take on any of it if we don't want to? The truth is there will always be people that will take on these causes. There will be people that come into the world to champion a cause and fight for change. Those people are amazing. Their work is necessary and important because it is how systemic change happens. It doesn't mean that everybody needs to do it though. It's a role that some people will choose to play. It's a valid role. But just because they play it doesn't mean I have to or you have to. It is okay to decide which roles you take on and which ones you leave behind. It is ultimately your choice regardless of what the world tries to tell you.

When you're looking around you at the world and you see things or maybe things happen in your own life, you have to decide what happens next. You're in control of you and that means making conscious choices for yourself about your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Awareness is what gives you the ability to take some control. It allows you to begin to question the story, which is what you're actually reacting to. You see you're not really reacting to what's happening around you, you're actually reacting to the story in your head or the thing that happened when you were 5. If you were just reacting to what was happening around you, you wouldn't respond the same way. You wouldn't have the story, the pain, or the judgment. You would be more neutral to it and it wouldn't affect you the same way.

The way you manage that is by recognizing it when it happens, doing the healing work that has shown up, and then choosing a different response. You're not questioning it and so you end up down the rabbit hole. You don't pay attention to what's going on in your head so you end up in random places all the time. I get it, the mind is a busy place, especially at the beginning, but if you never question it and you don't pay attention to it you can't change it.

This process is an active one and it can feel quite exhausting. It can be tiring to be constantly questioning yourself. This is the process that I've learned to do for myself. I catch the thoughts. I question the stories. I live like this every day. Is it tiring for me now? No. I'm used to it and I see the value of it. It's a habit that I now have that I rely on to be able to keep moving forward with my healing. It's too important to me now. It's the most valuable thing that I do consistently. It makes the most difference to me in terms of how easy or hard the process of healing is.

Questioning my thoughts is how I got control over my mind. I used to have all the stories. I used to go down those rabbit holes. I don't anymore because I've learned to question it. It's a little bit like redirecting a toddler away from a hot stove at the beginning. It's just this constant redirection back to something more helpful.

It's constantly asking yourself whether these thoughts are helpful or not. Is this story I'm telling true?

At the beginning, those questions helped me unravel the narrative of my past. The questions allowed me to see my past without the blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. By removing all that drama, I freed myself to accept the lessons that were available to me from those experiences. I freed myself to accept myself and where I was when those experiences happened. The version of me that had those experiences couldn't have done them any differently. Honoring and respecting that allowed me to let everybody else off the hook while removing the drama of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization from the story. This brought me acceptance of my past.

Try this. Conjure up one of the things that happened in your past that you have created a really colorful story about. Look for what was said versus how you interpreted what was said. They said "I hate you" and you heard your mother when you were a little kid telling you she didn't want you around. "I hate you" is just a phrase. It's three words that are used to cause pain and it worked. You felt the pain. But what you felt wasn't the pain of what they said, what you felt was the pain of what your mother told you when you were a kid. It had nothing to do with what was happening in that moment. It had everything to do with what had happened in your past. What if you remove the story of your mother and just took their words at face value without attaching them to any previous pain or trauma? Now how do you feel? It might still sting a little bit and that's okay. But now you can recognize the pain the other person is throwing around. Maybe you can even see the pain your mother was throwing around. Can you accept that neither of those experiences have anything to do with you? Can you accept that you don't need to attach pain to those words? Can you see how attaching the pain keeps you stuck in being hurt by that experience?

You probably added blame into that story. You blamed them for telling you they hated you. What were you really blaming them for? The truth is you blamed them for triggering the old pain from your childhood. The blame isn't in the present, it's in the past. It's not their fault they triggered your memory. That's on you to heal. You just didn't spend enough time questioning the story you were telling. They can say anything they want, what you do with it is up to you. In this case, you chose to allow it to trigger a childhood memory that keeps you in pain. You blame them for your memory. That's why you're stuck. You can get unstuck by dropping that story and taking responsibility for the memory you unconsciously attached to what was said.

The mind added in the drama for you because that's part of the ego defending itself. You do this unconsciously, we all do, unless or until you're willing to question the story. Are you willing to question that story? Are you willing to see it differently? Are you willing to look for where you attached painful memories to other, more recent experiences? Are you willing to detach the two so that you don't have to feel so much pain?

This is how we unravel everything. Experiences become jumbled up because we sort experiences into types based on old memories. This set of experiences triggers memories of my mother. This other set of experiences triggers memories of being

bullied in school. Here's yet another set of experiences that trigger memories of a teacher, the other parent, friends, or anything else want to attach things to. You take the ball of yarn and you make it bigger by adding leftover bits of other yarn to it. Pretty soon it becomes a jumbled mess that is difficult to sort out. What if we don't have to do this though? What if we can just use our ability to question our own thinking as a way of unraveling the yarn without the mess?

The huge ball of yarn makes you think you have all this pain. The truth is you don't have that much pain. You've added all kinds of pain in by your own doing because of the stories and the way you attach things to each other. Truthfully there are a very limited number of experiences that you actively need to heal from. You think you need to heal your whole life because you've jumbled everything together. But what if that's not true? What if you unraveled the yarn to realize you actually have very little work to do?

That's what happened for me, by the way. As I unraveled the jumbled mess I'd created for myself, I realized I had very few experiences that I needed to work with directly. There were very few things in my mind that stood out as being bigger or more important than the others. When I didn't have all the other stuff there too, they few things were easier to deal with. They were simpler to manage because they became a lot smaller.

What's easier to deal with 1 ball of yarn or a hundred of them? What if you just dealt with them one at a time instead of all together? Wouldn't that be easier? Why do you to try to jumble all the experiences together to create massive stories that are impossible to manage? Why not just deal with one story at a time? It's easier to do it that way if you can separate them. You separate them by using your ability to question to question your own thinking. Is this the only story I'm telling? Am I bringing in pain from other places? What drama am I creating by bringing in blame, shame, guilt, or victimization? How can I unravel that story? How can I remove the drama?

Questioning it is such a powerful way to heal. It focuses you differently so that you're not just focused on pain and fear. It focuses you in a way that allows you to get mental clarity around it. Then when you have mental clarity you can see it differently. Pain and mental clarity don't go together. They are kind of like oil and water. They don't mix. Pain doesn't allow you to see things clearly. It's a blanket over everything. It creates shadows, doubt, insecurity, and fear. It's a form of brain fog. We don't know what's there because all we can see is this blanket of pain. The fog is too thick. Mental clarity is how you remove the blanket and the fog so you can see what you're working with.

You need your brain to be clear so that you can heal more easily. Questioning is what gives you that clarity. It makes the brain have to sort itself out. It takes the ego out of the entire process. If you are driving through fog and all you pay attention to is the fog, you will crash. You have to pay attention to your driving and not the fog if you want to be safe. When people heal they have a tendency to pay attention to the fog, which is the story or the pain. That makes it difficult to drive safely or heal because they aren't paying attention to what they are doing. Your focus is important in this process and mental clarity is what gives you that focus.

Questioning helps to remove the emotion too, which is part of the fog. Now you're seeing it more logically which helps to remove some of the emotion. When you just look at things logically, you don't necessarily get emotionally involved. Taking some of the emotion out of the healing process is going to make the whole thing easier.

What happens is people try to heal emotions. We can't really heal emotions. They come attached to memories, stories, thoughts, and experiences. The emotion is not the problem, it just is. It's based on the judgment of what happened, the story that you tell, and the memories you attach to the experience. You can't wait for the emotion to go away. You have to dig into the experience to heal it. By questioning and getting out of the emotion, your focus is different and that allows you to actually free yourself to heal.

People get stuck in their emotions all the time because the emotion is almost like a bottomless pit. It will keep coming and coming until you decide to release it. You know this because every time you conjure up a memory you bring an emotion with you. It doesn't matter if the memory was last week or 40 years ago, it still has an emotion attached. That means that regardless of how long you've held onto the memory or how many times you've tried to heal, the emotion remains. It never goes away.

Anybody can bring up a memory and make themselves cry. If you use that as an indicator of how healed you are, then you'll never move past anything. Emotion will always be attached to the memory so that means that you have to be able to manage the emotion to gain clarity and heal whatever you're holding onto. The focus on the emotion is a distraction from questioning the story you're telling yourself. This is what feel the fear and do it anyway means. It means the emotion will be there and you have to learn to be okay with that. You just have to get okay with not allowing the emotion to stop you.

I've sat in this kind of stuff many times. I've had tears falling down my face while logically questioning my experience. Getting tied up in the emotion will keep you in it longer. You can make the choice to gain control over the emotion so that you can begin to question the experience. We're not squishing anything. What we're doing is understanding that the emotion is a response to whatever you're thinking about, but that doesn't mean you can't get clarity in that moment because you can. The emotion comes on and you keep your head screwed on straight at the same time. You don't have to get distracted by it. You can continue to heal and gain clarity, emotion or not.

It's not the emotion that's the problem, it's what you do with it. Usually we use it as a distraction. We let it get in our way. Because we don't take control of it, every time we try to heal we get sucked into the emotion and we lose the healing progress we were making. How many times have you a walked away from a healing session crying and not gone back to finish the healing? The simple fact is you will have to learn to move through the emotion if you wish to heal. That doesn't mean that you can't let it flow a little bit. It's fine to have a few minutes of cry it out if you need to, just don't stay there. Move through that consciously so that you can get back on track with your healing. That means understanding what triggered the emotion, where the pain is coming from, and what's under there that needs to be

released. You have the power to do this if you can remain aware of yourself while healing.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Outcome Unknown

We don't know the outcome a lot of the time. We have no idea what will happen. We don't know if it'll work out or not. We don't know if we'll be a huge success or fail miserably. We worry about all the problems and things that could go wrong. We have a giant list of all the reasons why not in our heads too, everything from what Grandma will think to worrying about ending up homeless and everything in between. That huge combination of things keeps people from moving forward. It stops them cold. Are you one of those people with a dream in your head and a huge list of reason why not? Read on.

I'm writing this chapter, like everything else, from my own life experience. I've spent most of the last couple of years in my business doing what I thought I was supposed to do instead of what I I wanted to do. Why? I wanted to be an author. I wanted to write books and blogs for a living, but I didn't see a way forward with that early on because I didn't have an audience. Heck, really early on I could barely give my books away for free let alone sell them. That meant I was trying to sell all kinds of things I really didn't want to be doing or selling because I was afraid of what would happen if I didn't have an income.

Well, before we get to how I got out of that loop, let's talk about what happened while I was focused on trying to create said income. The bills weren't paid anyway. Things went to collections anyway. I was borrowing money and asking for money anyway. The stress was there anyway. We struggled anyway. It all still happened anyway. Would it have mattered if I'd just spent the last couple of years writing? Nope. Those things still would have happened, and you know what? I would have been happier even with all that going on.

What changed was that I realized I wasn't getting anywhere. I wasn't actually solving any problems. I was just stressing myself out, living in fear, worrying about the next phone call, instead of just doing what I wanted to be doing. Those methods weren't working for me. I needed to find a different way, but first I had to figure out the fear and anxiety.

Healing the fear and anxiety meant sitting in it. It meant allowing it to be there while learning to control my thinking and just watching what happened. I had to

see that the outcomes weren't as bad as my brain was trying to make me believe. I had to learn that I could be okay anyway. I also had to figure out how to concentrate on other things instead of being fixated on problems. It truly became about changing my focus because I couldn't fix the problems. If the focus upset me then I just needed to stop paying attention to it.

That sounds kind of irresponsible doesn't it? Just don't pay attention to what you don't like. I suppose, in some ways, maybe it is. But here's the thing, it was my focus that was preventing me from doing the things that would fix the problem. If writing and blogging were the solution, then me focusing on trying to fix things I had no control over wasn't going to solve it. I had to write and blog.

My work on myself turned into learning how to change my focus, control my thinking, and stay out of the worry and fear. After that I had to learn to enjoy my work, not be distracted by problems, and trust that my work would be successful without me babysitting it, worrying about, putting pressure on it to make money, or being afraid that it would flop. It wasn't until I could do all those things that life began to shift.

Is that easy? No. I had to heal all the patterns and behaviors that were associated with my fixation on problems. I had to deal with the lack of worthiness, and the self-doubt, and the anxiety, and the fear, and the pain that came from not being able to fix it. I had to get a grip on me and stop trying to maintain my grip on the outside world. The outside world got to do whatever it wanted and I just learned to be okay within myself.

This created a relationship between me and what I actually wanted. I had to learn to be emotionally involved in my work. I had a saying when I worked for other people, "take your job on not in". By keeping yourself emotionally out of your work it allows you to take on your work without by frustrated by all the things you can't control. This is especially true when you work for other people. That saying didn't help me when I started working for myself though. The rules no longer applied. I had to allow myself to get emotionally involved. I actually didn't think it was possible to get excited about work. I thought the coaches I watched online were faking it. I didn't think that one could enjoy their work to that degree, until I started to enjoy my writing that much.

There was a reason I had a hard time being emotionally involved in my business though. It's simple really, I didn't trust it. I didn't believe I could have the life I wanted. I didn't believe I could be successful. I didn't believe people wanted to read what I wrote. I'd tried and failed in my computer business. My courses didn't really sell and I had to give away my books and even then, I had trouble finding people to read them. Why would I be able to be a success if that's all true? I'm no J.K. Rowling. I'm not going to be a one hit wonder. It's not going to be that easy. I'm going to have to come at it through the back door by offering all kinds of other stuff until I can build a following. It doesn't matter if I want to do those things or not, I have to do them because otherwise nobody will even know I exist.

The crazy thinking and pain were real. So much of that paragraph is just stories I made up to validate the reason why things weren't selling. They weren't true though. Looking to the outside world for validation is a really quick way to find

pain. Given the size of the population on the planet, there is a very small percentage of us that get validation publicly. So, waiting for the outside world to find us will just keep us in pain longer. The truth in all that was that what I was writing, what I was trying to sell, wasn't really what I wanted to do. The books were getting closer but I was still trying to fit in a box and I was still worried about what people would think when they read them. They weren't completely mine and no I don't mean they were plagiarized.

They weren't mine in the sense that I took myself out of most of them. I always felt like I was supposed to "teach" when I wrote books, which meant not sharing so much of myself and my life in them. Well, as it turns out, me sharing myself and my life is my work and if I don't do that there isn't much left. That was a hard truth though. It took me a long time to grasp just how important that was in everything I wrote or created. It wasn't just the books. It was the courses and the blog posts and my podcast and everything else. It absolutely had to be about me and what I was learning or what was happening in my life or it wasn't going to work.

Being emotionally involved in my work meant becoming my work. I'm my own test subject. It's my life I talk about all the time. I don't talk about drama. I don't give play-by-plays. I just recount generic events and then share what I learn or understand about those things. It's actually pretty straightforward. You probably follow people on YouTube that vlog their daily lives. Well, I do it in written form. The only difference between me and the YouTube folks, is that I'm probably going to share some spiritual truth with you or shift the focus in some way to gain benefit from the experiences that I have. I learn from every experience and I try to share what I learn every time. Doing that requires some level of emotional involvement. The deal was for a while, that I wasn't overly happy doing that because it felt really vulnerable and I was still learning how to share in a way that wasn't so triggered and painful.

Once I understood how to share appropriately, the next stage was figuring out what the benefit of doing that was. It can't just be about other people, I have to put myself back in it. What am I getting out of this? Because of the way I frame things to share them, by taking out the blame, shame, guilt, and victimization, it forces me to see those scenarios differently. It changes my focus and allows me to gain intuitive guidance at the same time. Both of those things mean that when I write about my experiences, I have epiphanies all the way through the blog I'm writing. I gain insight into my own struggle. I've learned to share the whole thing real-time, meaning that if I get an epiphany, I just write about it in the next paragraph. While I'm writing about the epiphany, I gain understanding and clarity and then immediately teach it back and re-frame it so that it's helpful to whomever reads it.

I work out things in my blogs all the time now because I've learned how valuable that process is to me. But I didn't start there. That was an outcome that I didn't plan on. Enjoying my work was an outcome I didn't plan on. Writing full time is an outcome I didn't plan on. Being emotionally involved in my work is an outcome I didn't plan on. I want you to see that I didn't plan any of this. It's just the way it's worked out because I've been willing to take the steps to get there as they showed up.

I started from not wanting to share about myself at all. I started from wanting to stay emotionally clear of my work the same as I had when I worked for others. I started from thinking I needed to sell all kinds of things until maybe one day my writing might support me (and yes, there was a ton of doubt around that). Over time, I've taken the steps that I've been shown one at a time, until eventually I got to where I am now.

Honestly, if somebody had shown me that staircase, I wouldn't even have started. I would have run away screaming. It's better to not know because if you knew what you were signing up for you wouldn't do it. Who would? Who would go through all this if they knew about it beforehand? Human nature means the not knowing is actually a gift that helps you to move forward. The hard part is that the mind makes all kinds of crap up to keep you from even thinking about starting the first place. But I promise you, if you knew everything that was ahead of you on that staircase, you would stay stuck in your "miserable life" for a very long time because the thought of doing all that work would be overwhelming.

The unknown is a gift. We don't see it that way because we want to know everything beforehand to remove the perceived risk. There is far more risk in you running away screaming if you did know everything, than there is in moving forward when you don't really know anything at all. It's just a mental game we play with ourselves. It's the mind trying to protect you from the unknown. The thing is that you don't need to be protected from the unknown. It is safe to move forward. You just have to decide to believe that.

I'm not writing this book because I've "arrived". I'm writing this book while I'm still learning and understanding my own path. Here's the thing that came to me earlier today. Conveniently and not surprisingly, it fits here in this very chapter that I'm writing right now. We all understand the analogy of the proverbial staircase. When you have a goal or a dream you get the first step on that journey. You don't get to see the whole staircase. Welcome to the unknown! What we try to do when that happens is fill in the blanks or modify the dream in some way so that it's not so scary to us. We try remodel the stair or step that we see because we don't like it.

The first two steps on my staircase were just to write without worrying about earning a living and then to free myself to just offer talks without needing props like handouts and PowerPoint presentations. It took me two years to stop trying to remodel that first step because I didn't see how I could earn an income just writing. I didn't have a blog with lots of subscribers and support through ads. I didn't have a big membership site. I could only write so many books and they only sold a few hundred each. I couldn't make a living that way either. So, I stopped myself in fear of not having any money coming in for years until it built up enough that I could earn a living from it.

That fear caused me to start trying to build a hundred other staircases with tarot readings and coaching options because I thought I needed something to sell. I didn't see step two yet. I wasn't clear on what that was. I only knew that I wanted to write all the time. The idea that I needed to support myself came from fear of what just writing would look like. Of course, those things never really worked because they weren't part of my path. They were things I threw in my own way because I thought I needed to.

I didn't get a clear view of step two until this morning when I started writing a post on social media and it hit me that I wanted to just talk and not have to write or make more content. This was after only a couple of weeks of writing happily, without needing to remodel or change anything. I had finally gotten okay with just doing what step one was, writing. It took me two years of working through fear, doubt, and anxiety to get to a place where I could write without fear.

What I finally understood this morning was that step two wasn't courses or even masterclasses, it was just presentations that I charged for. I kept trying to remodel it to be courses because that was the model that I saw. I didn't have big live shows with an audience that I could sell tickets to and then share YouTube clips from. That meant I had to do something different from that model. For me, the only other model I knew or even saw in other poeple was the one where I taught people things. But what if that isn't true? What if I don't have to do that? What if the teacher model doesn't work here?

These are the unknowns that we run into. Do you see how much the mind made up for me? It made up years of struggling to make a dollar because I didn't have a big audience. It brought up the old pain that life wasn't going to allow me to do what I wanted. That's the powerlessness that I felt for years. It kept trying to show me the same story because it only saw an unknown future that was filled with doubt. The way around that is simple awareness of yourself within the experience. It's all the things we've talked about so far. You change your focus away from problems, you get out of fear, you allow yourself to see the story you're telling and you question it, and you keep exploring until you find the truth for yourself whatever that is.

The powerlessness made me a victim of my life. "Life wouldn't let me do what I wanted." Life became the problem and I made myself a victim of it. I didn't have anybody else to blame because I'd removed that narrative from the story. I was the only thing in my own way. Because I couldn't blame anybody else, I just blamed life. The truth now is that life wasn't stopping me at all. I was stopping myself because I made up answers to questions that weren't true and that created all kinds of fear. The story of blaming life got me to simply create more pain for myself.

I want to point out here, that even though I'm showing you this like this, I'm not sitting around beating myself up for the last two years of my life. Regardless of whether I had seen that second step or not, I still would have had to heal the fear, doubt, worry, and anxiety. I would still have had to do the rest of the healing work. I needed all the experiences that I had. Things had to happen the way they did for me to be here right now. So no, I'm not getting out the hammer. This has all happened perfectly and I'm totally okay with it the way it is.

Where is your mind filling in the blanks? Where is your mind creating a story that doesn't exist? Where are you doing this kind of stuff to yourself? We throw all kinds of crap in our own way and then get frustrated when we can't move. You're burying yourself in stuff because you're not allowing yourself to simply the next step for what it is.

The problem is not the step, the problem is that it's outside of what seems comfortable to you right now. It's outside of where you feel comfortable moving

to. Sitting down to just write meant letting go of all the problems. It meant trusting that I didn't have to babysit my life. It meant trusting that I could focus where I wanted to. All of that was way outside of what I was comfortable doing. The belief that I had to pay attention to the problems was part of the problem. Letting go of that belief was hard and it required a lot of sitting in the fear and realizing that nothing was going to happen if I stopped focusing on problems.

Getting okay with allowing myself to do it and step way outside of my comfort zone was hard. What I ended up building in the background was courage. The courage to just do the steps when they showed up. That meant that this morning when the new idea showed up to do a presentation instead of a masterclass, I just shifted. I didn't even think about it. I had the courage to just simply pivot and shift the direction a little bit. Why did I have that courage? Because I've made a thousand of those little leaps over the years and now they are reasonably easy to do. I don't have to think that hard about what's going on. I can shift my energy, shift my focus, gain clarity, and then take the step really easily.

Courage is what helps me manage the unknown. Instead of making up the story about what I think is going to happen, I just allow the steps to show up. I don't have to be caught in stories anymore. That meant that when the step clarified itself today I could handle that clarity easily. I recognized the story that I'd been telling and that it wasn't true. Shifting it was then the easy part because I'd had the courage to do the rest. I've been struggling with this step for a long time so I'd created a lot of stories around it, long before I had enough clarity to understand what I was doing. It'll be easier next time. I get it now.

As I've said before, you don't build courage sitting on the couch. You have to do things to gain courage. These small steps that you get shown are how you gain courage. You do them one at a time as they appear. You deal with the fear that shows up and you move forward anyway. After that, you figure out how to get comfortable so that you can stay there. You don't do it by making up stories. You don't do it by distracting yourself with problems. You don't do it by arguing with it. You do it by being okay where you are and by trusting that you're safe.

Courage is a hard one because you do have to work through a lot of other things to get it. But if you can do it, it'll give you the power to keep going. Repetition is your friend. Courage comes from repeating the process many times over. Every time you take a new step you'll gain more courage. Eventually, you'll have done it a thousand times and you won't even blink anymore. You'll just accept and move on. Be patient with your process though. It doesn't come overnight. It happens gradually and it gets easier as time goes by. Relax into the process a little bit so that you're not pushing so much.

I'm guilty of the pushing. That's me! But the pushing doesn't really help because it just makes you frustrated with where you are. That makes it hard to recognize the next step when it shows up. Stop pushing. Start allowing. It will get better. Trust me on this. I've been there too.

What you'll notice in all of my stories is the hundreds and hundreds of steps I had to take to get here. I even went around in circles a few times and all of it added up

to me being here now writing this. The important part in this tale is the understanding that all those little steps you take are important and necessary. Keep taking those baby steps. They get you to where you want to go. They don't seem like much in the moment but they add up big over time.

Is it frustrating sometimes? Sure. I just talked briefly about my desire to push and move quicker than I am. Every week I'm onto something different. Every week it's a new epiphany, a new realization, a new moment of clarity. Every week is a new step or two or three that leads me closer to what I want. Notice the time frame though. It's weekly. It's not daily. It's not hourly. It's not 8 times a day. It used to be monthly or longer because it would take me that long at the beginning to work through things. I've sped up to weekly but it doesn't appear that I'm allowed to go faster than that. Darn it all! Honestly it's fine. It's almost a rhythm that I have now. Every week is something else and I know that, so when I pull cards on Friday for the week ahead, it's always signaling some new idea or way of being. There's always some kind of change in there.

Because of how this all works it becomes my content for the week too. So this week has been all about figuring out the steps in the process and clarifying that second step of just allowing myself to talk. Okay, mission accomplished and now I'm on to the next thing for next week. That's okay. It's actually brilliant because it gives me amazing clarity and time to share what I learn with all of you before moving onto the next thing.

It's amazing how much of this book has just become me living my daily life sharing the messages that I pick up along the way. It's not surprising that the lessons I learn in a given week correlate to whatever chapter I happen to be writing at the time. It all fits together. It all makes sense. It all serves a purpose. It has a discernible pattern that I'm aware of. It actually creates some sense of predictability even though there's an aspect of chaos to it because I'm in constant shift within myself.

Constant shifting. Constant content. Constant learning, growing, understanding, changing and accepting. Each of those things are little steps that I take every day as I learn to become more aware of myself within my own experience. With every shift I share with you what comes up. I share with you what happens next. I gain clarity from that and my hope is that it gives you some awareness around your own life.

Is it tiring? No. When it was really hard and lessons took a long time, yes it got tiring. But now I can maneuver pretty easily and it's no longer tiring. I've come to expect it and it's adding up to be really fun for me. I'm no longer bothered by all this like I used to be. The constant wheel used to be really hard. It felt like a hamster wheel, like it just never ended. But it doesn't anymore because I see the purpose in it.

I get it. It's hard when you're in the middle of a difficult shift to see the point. You see the pain and that's where you want to focus. If you can shift just slightly to notice where you are without the pain, then you can move. Then you can begin to see the steps and realize the purpose in all of it.

I definitely didn't get there right away. There was a ton of pain along the way.

But now, I get to enjoy the hamster wheel. I actually like the weekly challenge of shifting or releasing or changing something. I get a freakin' kick out of healing and growing and learning. I get a kick out of sharing the whole thing with you. It's absolutely brilliant!

That's all just a reminder to be okay in your own process, whether you see it clearly like that or not. It doesn't matter. The work is not to be frustrated by it or argue with it. There's a reason you're in the space you're in and your job is to figure that out. You'll stay there until you do. That's the fun part.

It can seem a little cryptic sometimes because these things aren't obvious to us unless we're paying attention. That's why I talk so much about being able to get yourself out of your own experience. It's because I want you to be able to see these things for yourself. I want you to know that can decode your own life. It is possible to get out of the story of what's going on and see the truth behind it. Note to self that the truth is never the blame, shame, guilt, and victimization that you add in. Those are all stories that you need to drop to be able to see your experience clearly.

We love to put the blinders on and we do that all the time. Blame, shame, guilt, and victimization are blinders. The blinders also include your focus on problems and unknown outcomes. All of those things prevent you from seeing the good in your goal. They prevent you from seeing the positives and they get you to make up a story about why not. You buy in all the time because you haven't yet learned to pay attention to those things. The more you can become aware of yourself, the more you will catch this stuff, and the less likely you will be to stay in the problem of it.

Every week something new comes into my awareness that I share with you. I haven't arrived. I'm not there yet. It's an ongoing process and one that I will do for the rest of my life. What that means is that it's okay if you don't catch it right away. It's okay if you don't become aware of it instantly. I can't see every pattern and habit that I have, that's why I get something new every week! I just slowly shift them as they show up.

Potentially the only difference between you and I is that I'm willing to not only accept whatever shows up but also question it. I'm open to the new things all the time. There is never a point where I'm not willing to do that work. I've probably said it multiple times in this book alone, but it's never a question of whether or not I'll do the work, it's just how long it takes me to get there. Some days, I don't move so quickly. Sometimes my human needs a moment and sometimes I just darn well don't feel like it right away. Both of those things are okay. I just balance that with the awareness that I can't stay where I am forever, I have to move forward. It's there for me to deal with. I might allow it for a few hours or a day, but I will always do the work.

This is why I tell you not to beat yourself up. Don't get out the hammer. It's fine to honor yourself, just do it with awareness. Do it with the understanding that at some point you are going to have to do it anyway, you will have to move. It's just a matter of how long it takes you to do it. If you're really in the soup and it takes you a week or two or three, cool. There isn't a problem with that.

There is method in the madness that is being me. There is a reason why I move

quicker. Part of that is because it's become my "job". It is my content. If I don't do it, I have nothing to share. So me moving along is actually beneficial, it's helpful. It sort of creates this never-ending content loop for me which I really enjoy. To be honest, I'm not doing anything major these days. This stuff is all what I would call little things that don't require any deep emotional work or anything like that. It's mostly just different ways of thinking and seeing things. I'm not healing massive pain these days, which means I can move faster and not overwhelm myself or burn myself out. Now, if I ended up in major trauma again, would that change? Very likely yes, but I'm not there. So I'll keep moving until I can't because something has happened that I'm not able to manage easily.

I suppose what I'm showing you here is that the unknown isn't scary. I walk into the unknown all the dang time. Like the Fool in tarot, I've become completely oblivious to this idea that something bad might happen or that I might not get the outcome that I want. I've learned that I have what I need and that I'll be okay regardless of what happens. Healing for me lately is a giant game of Dare. It's not a big, laborious process anymore. It's actually really easy and kind of fun (in a sadistic sort of a way)! I've learned to be okay with being okay. That gives me a freedom that wasn't there before.

The unknown stops you, but it's not because it's unknown, it's because you're afraid you won't be able to handle it. But you know what? You can handle it. How do I know? You got here didn't you? Keep going into the unknown. You'll be fine. Trust yourself.

CHAPTER NINE
The Pain Appears

Suddenly you find yourself in pain. It's not new pain. You've been here before but now you have to figure out what to do with it. You could wallow in it. You could feel sorry for yourself. You could argue with it. You could create a story about it in your mind. You could tell everybody you know about it (Like I do all day long completely intentionally with a purpose.), after all misery loves company. Or you could decide to simply become aware of yourself and begin the process of questioning what's coming up.

Now, let's get clear on what I mean by pain. For our purposes here, we're not talking about fresh trauma. We're talking about things from the past, memories and stories you've hung onto for years, things you've cried out dozens of times before, and things you thought you were done with but are still coming up. There's a reason for all these things and each of them serves a purpose for you to discover more about yourself and the truth of your life. Let's see if we can use this chapter to decode some of those mysteries. It's not as hard as it seems.

Pain shows up not to make us suffer but to make us pay attention. As humans, we are generally taught to pay attention to pain but only for the purposes of making it go away. We aren't really taught that it actually serves a purpose or that we can use it to help ourselves. Every so often somebody kind of falls into it. They have some major trauma and it turns into a life mission. They start a non-profit organization or something and off they go. Don't get me wrong, I love those stories. They are awesome examples of how we can use pain to help not only ourselves, but also others. But what if we could do it more intentionally? What if it didn't have to be quite so dramatic?

When you find yourself struggling with a painful memory or something that was triggered by the outside world, what do you do with it? What is your process? Have you ever thought about what you do when you find yourself in pain? Have you ever questioned that? By the way, it doesn't have to be major trauma or anything huge, pain can be small things, even just a little bit of fear showing up can be painful. I use the word "pain" to encompass a lot of different things. It includes everything from major trauma to being afraid to jump into a cold pool and

everything in between. What do you do when that memory gets triggered? What do you do when that thing happens again? What's the process?

Over time I've created a process for myself and I've shared it openly many times. When I become aware of some pain or fear of some kind, regardless of how big or small it is, my process is to write about it so that I can understand it. I do this process publicly in blogs and on social media posts, but you may do it in a journal. You may not write at all. You might go for a walk or meditate or something else. All those things are fine. There's nothing wrong with any of them. There is no wrong to do it. The idea is to use that activity to understand the pain instead of just wallow in it and tell yourself stories about it.

When I write about whatever has come up for me, you'll notice that if I find myself in a story I'm very quick to point it out to you. Because I write publicly, I'm paying attention to myself the same way I would pay attention to you if I were coaching you. It allows me to get up and out of my own stuff really easily (maybe a little too easily) and therefore see what the pain is trying to show me pretty quickly. Once I catch the story the next step is to figure out what the truth is. The truth isn't the story. The truth isn't the blame, shame, guilt, or victimization we like to add in. The truth is there is some old habit, pattern, or idea that we are hanging on to and it needs to be shifted or even released.

The last bit of fear I had that revolved around some hidden thinking was that it wasn't okay to offer my paid content consistently. It was a fear I confronted by simply getting consistent with my offers. I started to do it every day, regularly. I'm willing to make those little leaps and do those things for myself because I understand how important and beneficial those little steps are. They add up over time to massive change as you can see if you've been watching me for a while. I've done a lot of these little leaps.

So, even though I was willing to keep showing up, there was still this weird energy back there that wasn't removing itself. It needed a little encouragement. It ended up I really didn't even need to write about it. It was enough for me to just pay conscious attention to it and that released it, but my first thought when I become aware of this energy that was hanging on was to write about it. It's my go to. That's how I deal with this stuff all the time.

I highly encourage you to come up with your own process that allows you to understand what you're experiencing without the focus on the pain. You see I'm aware of pain, but I don't focus there. Do you see that difference? When you focus on pain your goal is to get rid of it and you end up wallowing in it and making up stories about it. Focusing on pain takes you down the rabbit hole. Becoming aware of it is the process of noticing it without identifying with it. It's the identification with it that causes you to go down the rabbit hole. If you didn't identify with it and you just became aware of it, then you could consciously decide what to do about it. You wouldn't just react to it. You would notice it and ask yourself what to do about it.

Have you ever looked down at your finger and realized it was bleeding? You didn't feel the cut happen, but you suddenly became aware of the cut when you saw the blood. How many of you, even without feeling any pain at all, suddenly

start screaming because you cut yourself? Unless you have some psychological issue that causes you to react strongly to the sight of blood, most of you probably just grab a tissue and clean yourself up. You don't really think about it too much. Psychological issues aside, this is the response we can learn to have to all of our old pain when it gets triggered. It doesn't have to be this sudden overwhelming response. We don't have to heal for weeks. We don't have to stay in it for hours. We can become aware and quickly let it go. We can just clean up the blood and grab a bandage. It doesn't have to be a big thing.

Identifying with pain is the process of taking it on as part of who we are. I am my pain. It's the process of seeing the cut on your finger and suddenly identifying as being wounded. It makes room for the pity party. It makes room for the story you might start to make up. Imagine making up some crazy tale around how you got the cut on your finger you didn't even feel happen. This is what we do to ourselves all the time when old pain gets triggered. The fun part is that we don't recognize we do it.

I just had a conversation the other day with somebody who was telling themselves a story about money or the potential lack of it at some unknown point in the future. Why were they telling themselves this story? Because they weren't giving themselves permission to cut off clients for a while so they could focus on other goals. The mind made up the money story to cover up what was actually a habit of people-pleasing. They wanted to do a thing and didn't feel like they were allowed because of other people. The story became that other people would be mad and they would never be able to make money again because they would lose all their clients.

This kind of thing is an unconscious pattern that we have the ability to question on our own. We can successfully decode this by ourselves. The pain showed up as worry about future money issues that aren't happening. I acknowledged the pain but only questioned what they were afraid of. We didn't dive down the rabbit hole of pain. The answer to that question led me to more questions. I just continually questioned the story until I understood that the problem was actually fear of what other people would think. It was just people-pleasing and nothing else. Once I saw that, again still acknowledging the pain, simply offered permission and reminded them of all the shifts that I had made myself over the past few days.

It's not a magic trick. It's just awareness. It's acknowledging pain without being sucked in. It's learning to keep your head screwed on straight even while you're feeling emotion. It's perpetually questioning stories, fears, and worries until you find the pattern, habit, or thought they are attached to. When you can figure out what the old pattern, habit, or thought is you can break it. That is what allows you to heal and keep going.

We need to bring up the concepts of past, present, and future again. I know we did a whole chapter on this already, but let's add an idea or two to it. First the past is in your imagination, that's what memories are. They are photo albums and movies that you store in your mind. They are not real anymore. They were real in the moment that they happened. Now that they are past they become part of your imagination and part of the story that you tell. Second the future is also your imagination. It hasn't happened yet and you have no idea what will happen. You

project yourself into the future by buying into the story your mind tells about what might happen. The present is only the moment in time you're physically in. The present is not the entire day. The present is not even an hour or a minute. The present is only the second that you're in, everything else is either past or future and part of your imagination.

What that means is that any expectation of future events is in your imagination. You may have some assurance that a certain thing is going to happen, however until it actually does it's just in your imagination and it remains a story that you're telling. That thing might happen in 5 minutes and that's fine if it does, but until you're in that new present moment and it's actually occurring it is just your imagination. Why is all of that important?

Perspective. When you recognize the concepts of past, present, and future as being 99% in your imagination, it allows you to pull back from your experience a touch. That extra breathing room allows you to get out of the story of it. These are all concepts that Eckhart Tolle talks about all the time. It's the idea that the present moment, at least to your mind, is generally boring. For the most part nothing is really happening in the present. If you're sitting there reading this, the present moment is pretty dull for your mind (No, my book is not boring!), so your mind is in the past or the future. We might have a few seconds of excitement or drama in what would be a present moment but those few seconds are quickly behind us, suddenly relegated to the imagination. The amount of excitement that happens in the present is minimal. What the brain does is extend that present moment way out into the future. Suddenly something that lasted a few minutes or an hour in what would be considered the present moment, is suddenly drawn out into multiple days, weeks, months, or years by the mind. The brain drags it out because it needs something to do so it puts the story on replay. This is where we start judging what happened. This is where we add the drama of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. This is where we identify with it and take it on as our own. This is where we get into trouble.

It's this idea of having a bad 5-minutes versus a bad day. The brain wants to identify with the painful 5-minutes and drags it out to be a bad day, week, month, or year. The longer the brain drags out that bad 5-minutes the more likely you are to create a story about things. The more likely you are to dive into blame, shame, and guilt, and victimization. The farther down the hole you go, the harder it is to get back out. The more you victimize yourself with those stories the more you identify with what happened. Suddenly you find yourself in a whole world of pain mostly generated by the mind and the story its telling, not by what actually happened.

Again we're not talking about major trauma. The situations that I'm working with here are the minor day-to-day things that come up. But it's amazing what the mind will do to even the most minor of things. The more we can learn to catch those things and become aware of them, the easier it is to stay out of the rabbit holes.

Do these principals apply to major trauma? Yes, as long as you've done the deep healing work or as I like to say, as long as you've cried it out sufficiently. As long as you've dealt with the original trauma. If you haven't dealt with the original trauma

then this probably won't help you a whole bunch. You will still have a lot of pain to wade through. So what we're talking about here is the things that trigger the old trauma, it's all the habits and patterns that we created to survive the pain of the trauma or to survive the trauma itself depending on the scenario. Those patterns and habits are what keep us stuck and keep triggering the old trauma. The problem that most people have is they don't recognize these patterns. That's what I try to encourage people to do; recognize where you're still using survival skills you no longer need.

Those skills can be anything from people-pleasing, to backing down, to walking away, to being afraid of everything and everyone, to complete powerlessness, to being anti-social, scared of relationships, avoiding people entirely, and so on. The list is almost endless. Those are things that we all have, we all do them, and they are survival skills. We learned to do them because they made our lives easier at one point. They no longer make our lives easier now. They actually make life more difficult because they prevent you from doing all kinds of things that would make you happy and move you forward in your life.

Powerlessness is the thing that I talk about most often. To be honest, that is mostly an umbrella term for a whole host of different things that I did like people-pleasing, like not making my own choices, and defaulting to everybody else's opinions by deciding that everybody knew better than I did. Because powerlessness was more than just one thing, it took me a long time to dig into all the little patterns, habits, and behaviors that I had because of it. It didn't happen overnight. It's taken a long time to get to where I am and I still recognize that there is more work to do in other areas. There will be more things. I'm not done yet.

It's okay that those things take time. It's okay that you don't pick them all up in the first 5-minutes. I promise you the Universe will give you plenty of opportunities to identify these different patterns and begin to change them. All we're talking about is changing behaviors. There is nothing to actually heal. You might identify where that survival skill came from and that's okay. But that doesn't mean you need to go back to that specific event and heal anything from it. It does mean that you need to stay in the relative present and change the behavior so that it stops getting in your way. Your job is to figure out what the better behavior is. You have to decide what will serve you the best and then do that. The hardest part of that whole process is becoming aware of that behavior and then beginning to actively change it.

Changing behavioral patterns is hard. It takes a lot of awareness to recognize your response to some trigger outside of you and then to stop yourself from mindlessly reacting to it. Awareness can take a lot of work and it requires a lot of mental control. Let's look at it this way. You are a spirit in a meat suit. You are a spirit first and your human form is a vehicle for your spirit to drive around in while hanging out on planet Earth. When the spirit is not firmly grounded in the body it floats just outside the body. That floating means that the person is not aware of themselves and their physical form.

My daughter's spirit actually floats outside of her. She pays very little attention to the world around her and is not always aware of her physical form. She doesn't always know what she's doing. It's like she's not paying attention to her own life.

She's going through the motions instead of being grounded in her body and actually being present for her life. No, this doesn't have to be traumatic, it doesn't have to be of result of trauma or mental illness. It can just be a simple way of being for that spirit and that human form. For my daughter to become aware of herself, she's first going to have to work on grounding her spirit into her body. It's not until she's anchored her spirit into her physical form that she will be able to gain any sort of awareness of herself in her human experience.

A common indicator of a floating spirit is absent-mindedness. It is that almost oblivious nature, just not really paying attention to what's going on, being zoned out or not tuned into the world around you. It's not bad. This isn't judgment. There is no trauma going on. It's just a way of being in the world. But it's a way of being that makes awareness challenging. So if you recognize these types of behaviors in yourself, ground your spirit into your body first. Focus on your root chakra and get it moving. A good healer can help you with this because they can tune into your energy field, understand what's going on, and then give you ways to ground yourself better.

When we tune out because of pain we have to work with it a little differently because to tune back in means we have to get okay with feeling the pain again. Who wants to do that right? Here's where this idea of past, present, and future really comes into play. If there is nothing happening in your present moment, then the pain you are experiencing is in your head. No, you're not making it up and you don't have a mental illness, you're bringing it up, you're creating it for yourself in the present because you've identified with it. It's on replay in your head, not because it has to be but because you let it be. Your present doesn't have to be painful, you've just created that for yourself because you let your brain dictate to you what it wants you to think about and feel. You haven't taken control yet.

When you take control you stop your brain from focusing on all the things that cause you pain. It doesn't mean you ignore the pain. We're not squishing or ignoring anything. We're just learning to be conscious of our thoughts and feelings all the time. We're learning that we don't have to avoid life to be okay.

You don't need to keep replaying that thing that happened 30 years ago. When you replay it in your brain you're bringing it into your present and then it causes you pain. That's your own doing. That's not about other people. It's not about what happened. That's you making a choice, consciously or not, to feel the pain of an experience you've already had for no reason. You replaying it is not serving a purpose in this moment except to upset you. You're allowing that and you don't have to. You can take control of that.

It's one thing when you recognize some pattern or habit that you have and you've created a mental connection to that previous experience. Maybe when you trigger the memory in that instance you feel a little bit of pain, but it shouldn't be anything you dive into. That should be a controlled environment so that you don't get sucked into the emotion of things.

Anybody can look at a picture and cry. I can pull up memories that upset me too. Here's the thing, I don't do that to myself unless it serves a purpose. I don't recall pain unless I need to recall pain. So I don't look at memories that upset me

until I need to. I'm not avoiding anything because if it gets triggered I'm quite happy to deal with it. I'm just not allowing those things to ruin my present moment for no reason. I don't have it on replay in my head.

Your present probably isn't all that painful, especially if you're just sitting around reading this. What is painful is the thoughts you keep rolling around in your head. If you could just knock that off for 5-minutes you'd be fine. The only reason you're not fine is because you're not in control of the thinking problem. This is what awareness is. It's giving you a method to get control of the crazy thinking. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to take control of your thinking so that you can feel better more of the time?

My brain was a run away train too. One thought at a time starting with the things that were screaming the loudest, I began to gain control. I recognized how unhelpful those thoughts were and I shut them down. I stopped allowing the kind of thinking that caused me pain when there was no reason to be in pain. If I could look around and honestly say that there was nothing happening right then and there, then the thought was unhelpful and it needed to go away. Yes, it is alright to tell your brain to take a hike.

Just like you can look at a picture from the past and cry, you project yourself into the future and make yourself afraid of what's coming. It's easy to make up a story about all the things that will go wrong and won't work out right. When we do that we create fear around the unknown future. That fear means we don't allow ourselves to take the next step. What if you could stop projecting into the future so that you could move forward and still be okay?

All those worst-cast scenarios and what if's do is make you feel like crap. But is there a reason in your present to feel like crap? Is something actively happening right now? If the answer is no, then what are you afraid of? What are you worrying about?

Then you tell me you have to make a plan. Okay, fine, let's make a plan the same as you would a dinner reservation. When you call the restaurant to make a dinner reservation, how much fear do you feel? Do you spend the rest of the week in fear of what's going to happen at dinner on Saturday? No, of course not. Why do you do that with your life? Treat your future the same was as you do that dinner reservation. Since you can't control it anyway, just make a plan and let it go.

The difference between your life and the dinner reservation is that you project yourself into the future of your life, but you don't project into dinner on Saturday. The difference between projecting or not is the difference between fear or not. It is the imagining being there and going through the experience that causes the fear. You could do the same thing with a dinner reservation, but you don't and that's why you're not afraid of dinner.

It's okay to make a plan to do a thing, whatever the thing is, just don't project yourself into it anymore. I made the plan to do a live presentation, actually multiple live presentations. When I planned the first one I wrote notes down to make sure that I had an idea of what I wanted to say. I did not project myself into that presentation. I did not get into fear. I just simply allowed it to be what it would be. You know what? It went fine. Projecting into the future would have made me

afraid of it and I probably wouldn't have done it. There have been many times where I have projected into the future, caused myself to be afraid and then not moved forward. Every single time in this book that I've talked about my own fear, the fear came from me projecting into the future. If I had simply not projected into the future, I would have been able to be okay.

Where you are in your head in terms of past, present, and future is important because it determines how you feel about what's happening. The past generally will keep you in pain and the future will keep you in fear. The present is the only place where you will actually be able to feel reasonably comfortable most of the time. It's the only place that doesn't have a bunch of pain and fear associated with it. Do you know how I know? Because you're sitting there reading this, that's how. Sitting there reading this means the present is absolutely fine. There is no pain and there is no fear. If either of those are present, it's because you've pulled them in from somewhere else. They are not part of your current experience.

Have you ever considered how your past trauma has affected your current behavior? I've talked a lot about patterns and habits that we all have that often are created from pain. To survive trauma we had to adapt ourselves to the situations that we found ourselves in. Particularly if trauma happens when we are small children, we don't have the capacity to process what's happening. That means there is a lot of adapting and coping that we do. We have a ton of little behaviors and things that we started doing to manage pain in the past. Those things are now causing us trouble. They keep us stuck in some ways because they make it hard for us to heal the old pain. We can't heal old pain when we are still using the coping mechanisms we created because of the pain. We have to break those old patterns.

The hardest part of breaking those old patterns is recognizing them a lot of the time. We don't generally focus on our behavior enough to see them. We don't pay that much attention to ourselves quite honestly, at least not in the way we need to. We pay attention to things about ourselves that don't matter so much. We pay attention to the things we aren't bothered by. What we don't pay attention to is how we respond and react to everything and everyone around us. What we don't pay attention to is whether or not we're throwing pain around. What we don't pay attention to is all those little habits we have that keep us unhappy.

Somebody asks us to do something for them and we say yes even though we don't want to do it. There's a pattern there that we're not acknowledging and not changing. Why? Because of fear of what other people will think or fear of an argument or fear of disappointing people. This tiny little unconscious pattern keeps us in a cycle of pain. We pay no attention to these little patterns except to be bothered them and complain about all the things we don't want to do, but we don't actively make a new choice. We don't change our behavior we just hope the other person will stop asking, but they don't.

It's not just one person that we do that for either, we do it for 10 or 20 people, and then wonder why we're miserable. We want to blame the people around us instead of recognizing it's us saying yes that's the problem, not the people asking for help. That tiny little unconscious behavior got created from pain somewhere

along the way. Somebody told you that you didn't have a choice, that you had to give in, that you had to do what you were told. Because you were told that, every time somebody asks you to do something, you do it. Somewhere you gave up your autonomy and your ability to make a choice for yourself.

Chances are, there are 25 other behaviors just like this one, that you still live from and don't even recognize you do. You'd rather worry about things that don't matter because they are easier to deal with. That's why Netflix and Hulu and all the other things make awesome distractions because they allow us to avoid ourselves. We're so afraid of other people and what will happen that we won't even think about own behavior, never mind actually change it. We'd rather complain about the state of the world, the weather, the football game or that there is nothing to watch on the 300 TV channels we have because it's easier. It doesn't hurt so much.

Now you're stuck in the pain. It gets triggered and you get the idea that maybe you need to deal with it, but it's so overwhelming that you just run away screaming. Even though you've done the cry it out, you can't release the pain because you still live from it by giving into everybody around you every single day of your life. Do you know how I know this pattern? Because I had it myself.

I didn't own a damn thing as far as my own behavior was concerned. My entire life was somebody else's fault. My entire life was at the mercy of what other people thought I should do. When I settled and got married, it was because other people made me. It wasn't because I wanted to. I wasn't in control of my own life. I didn't accept that I could make my own choices. I didn't accept that I had the power to say no. I made myself so completely miserable that I became a danger to myself. Something had to change. That was when I decided to heal myself. If I'm honest about it, my decision to heal myself felt like a cop out. I'd been in so much pain for so long that the decision to heal offered relief before I'd even done any healing. The choice to heal was that powerful at that point because of how miserable I had made myself.

The behaviors you have are more obvious to you than you think they are because they cause you to be annoyed with your life. They are all the things that you do in a day that you wish you didn't have to do. Every one of those things comes from a place of feeling like you have to or feeling like you can't. That's all based on old pain. None of it is true. The justifications you have in your mind for all these little behaviors are probably based on other people in some way. Whether it's what people will think, what they will say, or just a fear that they will walk away from you, these stories about how other people will react keep making you do things you don't want to do.

Here's the thing, most of the time those ideas we have in our heads never happen. The people that were affected by my shifting didn't leave. As a matter of fact, some of those relationships improved. Yes some of those relationships faded off, but they didn't end in a massive blow out. It wasn't a big tragic event. It was just people quietly backing off because they recognized that I wasn't going to be the same person anymore. Is that a bad thing? No. Because it allowed new people to come in that actually appreciated the new version of me.

Why do we stay so attached to people that keep us stuck and make us feel like

crap? Why do we feel the need to punish ourselves by staying in these relationships that don't work anymore? Are we afraid to end up alone? I do believe this is part of it. We're scared of what fills in the space we create in our lives. The truth is, better people and things show up when we allow them to. Honestly, a little alone time isn't a bad thing either. It's okay to take the space you need to figure out who you are and what you want. It's okay to take the time you need to heal. It's okay if that healing process doesn't always include other people.

My healing journey has been a solo one. Because I was completely powerless, if I had reached out to other people to get help with my healing process, I would have given my power away. I would have let them override my authority. I'd still be stuck back at the beginning trying to figure out what to do and how to heal because I wouldn't have allowed myself to follow my own intuition and guidance.

I appreciate that for some people they need the external support. If you're able to maintain your own power, if you're able to not override your own authority, and it works for you by all means. But when you're prone to giving up your power like I was, healing by committee was only going to make things worse. I had to be able to retain the tiny little bit of power I did have to be able to begin healing in the first place. The only way I could truly do that was by keeping the journey to myself for quite a long time.

I'll be honest that I'm an extroverted introvert. I like people but I don't need a lot of people all the time to be okay. When I'm out with people or I'm in public, I'm bubbly and happy. I have a sense of humor, I'm super friendly, I'm outgoing. But when I'm alone, I like to be alone. I don't need people. I'm okay at home everyday by myself for 2 weeks without talking to anybody. I can be completely okay in my own world. There is no sense of needing anything from the outside world. My connection to myself is stable and I'm able to give myself what I need without having to go look for it in other people.

I want to be really clear though that there is nothing wrong with needing other people. It's okay to ask for advice or help. When you do it just make sure it agrees with you, you're not giving up your power, and you're not doing it to make anybody else happy. You do things for you because you want to not because you're worried about what other people are thinking or feeling. Does that sound selfish to you?

Before you send me hate emails, just read on for a minute because this is part of the struggle that people have and that we are seeing play out in the world. Where do I stop and you start? Where is the boundary between you and I? This tug-of-war plays out in all sorts of ways in our daily lives. We are told to do things for other people. We are actually taught to sacrifice ourselves for others. The consequence of that is a lot of really miserable people who pay no attention to their own needs and wants. They don't put themselves on their own priority list. They don't say no very often, if at all. They are completely out of balance and leave no time for themselves. They worry far more about others than they do themselves. They act almost as martyrs by justifying their misery claiming that it's more important that other people are happy.

We have a society that is upside down and backwards in the way it discourages

people from taking care of themselves. I think one of the reasons that happens is because of the amount of greed we see out in the world. The way to balance all the greed is to give like you have an unlimited cup. What if that isn't actually the solution? What if it makes it worse?

Greed happens because people see things like money as finite. There is only so much to go around so they need to hoard it all. That creates greed. It's a lie by the way, the world will never refuse another millionaire. We try to balance that by giving up ourselves to the greater good. Don't get me wrong, if you're called into service in some way and that's what you want to do, it's your mission in life, by all means go ahead and do it. For most people though, it's not a life calling, it's a triggered state of being told they weren't important, they didn't deserve, they couldn't have, and that they should just focus on other people instead. They do it from a very wounded place, it's got nothing to do with being in service.

I have been called into service and for a long time that looked like me living my life, learning lessons and sharing them out into the world. When I would talk about the pattern that I was in of healing myself and then sharing those lessons out, I would find myself reminding people that it's not from a place of martyrdom. I'm just living my life doing my thing, these things would happen anyway, I'm just lucky enough to be able to share the lessons I get from those experiences with others. I'm lucky enough to be able to decode the illusion and understand what's really happening. Being in service this way is a gift, it's not martyrdom and I'm not doing it from a triggered, wounded place. The truth is I wouldn't do anything else. I am exactly where I need to be doing exactly what I want to be doing. It's brilliant!

For many years though, I did do things as a martyr. I gave up a lot of my goals and dreams because other people didn't want me to do things. I sacrificed a lot of things that were very important to me because other people didn't like them. I did the martyrdom thing for a long time and that's part of the reason why I talk about it the way I do. I want people to put themselves on their own lists and start being a little more selfish.

Do you know what happens when you become more selfish? You have more to give back. The cup gets bigger. You have more to share. You're no longer constantly functioning at a deficit just trying to keep your head above water. Suddenly there is room to spare. Suddenly you have more than you did before. Suddenly it's easier to do those things, you're not as bothered by them, and you even do them willingly. It changes your entire perspective when you can get okay within yourself first and then project that outward. Instead of projecting out more pain, now you're projecting out happiness. What a difference that makes to how you see the world around you!

The pain is there the majority of the time because of how you see everything in your world whether it has already happened, is happening now or will happen in 2 weeks. Major trauma aside, most of the time life doesn't show you that much pain. It's just your interpretation of what's going on that causes you the pain. If you just shifted how you see things a little bit you would find you feel a lot less pain.

Life got a lot easier to manage when I stopped allowing worry and fear to take over and I got control over my thinking. Nothing had really changed in my external

world but not having crazy thoughts, fear, and worry taking up space in my life meant I felt better immediately with little change to my environment. How would your life change if you did that for yourself? What difference would that make to your life? How would you feel?

We can't make the problems go away. We need to learn how to be okay with the problems still present in our lives. We're not going for a problem-free life. We're figuring out how to be okay in the life we have. How do you do that? Stop worrying about the problems, don't be afraid of them, and stop thinking about them. Don't keep replaying them in your mind. Get control of your thinking. It's the thinking that causes the majority of the worry and fear anyway. It's the replay of it in your head that keeps you from being able to enjoy the moment you're in.

Remember to look around you. Remember where you are. If you're sitting on the couch at home and there is nothing happening, then why are you letting worry and fear wreck that moment? What's the point in that? Is it getting you anywhere? Are you solving the problems like that? Probably not. So what are you doing then?

It's a habit, a bad habit that we have and we get taught to do by the people around us. Why? Because they do it. Nobody taught them and consequently nobody taught you that your mind didn't have to be a run away train, that you didn't have to spend your life worried and afraid, and that you could choose how to respond to what was happening around you. Once you learn how to do these things for yourself, you free yourself to actually enjoy the life you have.

Do you want to know the best part of this whole thing? When you're not replaying problems in your head and caught in worry and fear, you can actually find solutions to all those problems. You begin to recognize where your power is and what you can do with it. You have far more control than you give yourself credit for. You just bury it under all kinds of worry and fear. It's blocked by your mind that wants to spin 24 hours a day. You can get control. You just have to decide to do that.

CHAPTER TEN
Recognizing Patterns and Habits

Blame, shame, guilt, and victimization are the reason why we have all the patterns and behaviors that we do. Without blame, shame, guilt, and victimization you would have no reason to create all the patterns and habits you have because you wouldn't be holding onto any of the trauma that would create the patterns in the first place. You would in fact, be able to heal and release without much of a problem. So, let's talk about blame, shame, guilt, and victimization so we can understand what those are, where the patterns come from, and how to release all those things.

We'll start by acknowledging that sometimes things happen in our lives that we don't have control over and that require us to defend ourselves, even physically. It is entirely possible that somebody did something to you or maybe even physically harmed you somewhere in your past. Blame, shame, guilt, and victimization are defense mechanisms and coping mechanisms. It's a way of actually avoiding some of the pain. That can be helpful in particularly traumatic experiences. Often the brain, without conscious thought, recognizes a high level of trauma and protects the person by either blocking things out entirely or moving to blame, shame, guilt, or victimization as a way of managing pain.

I personally have experiences in my own life that I unintentionally blocked out because of trauma. I understand the purpose this serves in terms of human survival. Sometimes these things are just necessary. There is nothing wrong with them. In these cases the brain is doing its job to keep the body safe and to maintain what we call sanity. If there is a danger of too much mental trauma the brain will block out certain events. If we are physically injured but still in danger, where possible the brain will block out pain to allow the person to get to safety. These are survival mechanisms that the body has in place. They are frankly brilliant. It shows the power of the mind to help protect the human form.

It bears repeating that for the most part we're not talking about major trauma in this book, we're talking about the more typical daily experiences that all of us get to work through. What follows below could be used with major trauma if you're far enough out of it and you've done enough healing around it. If it feels

overwhelming to you or you're simply not ready yet, don't try to do it. Apply this stuff to the places in your life where you can handle it.

When I used to work with clients I would tell them to start with the smaller things. Don't pick the most important relationship you have in your life to test out how to change your boundaries the first time. You don't have to pick out the biggest, the most stressful, or the hardest thing and work on that first. Start from where you are with what you can handle and work from there. That doesn't mean you can't pick from the pile of things that is screaming the loudest, but maybe pick something smaller from that pile to work on first. You don't have to start with the biggest, most important thing. Please remember to take on what you can handle. As you go forward, you will get better at this and you will be able to handle more. Take your time and start from where you are.

Blame, shame, guilt, and victimization are common things that we do in our day to day lives with experiences that aren't necessarily all that traumatic. They are not the result of major trauma most of the time, they are simply regular day-to-day experiences that we add all kinds of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization into, even though those things may not be all that helpful under normal circumstances. They can be convenient stories that we make up to make ourselves feel better on a daily basis.

Blame, shame, guilt, and victimization are the stories that we tell. They are often the color that we add to the play-by-play of our daily lives. Remember that all experience just is and it is neutral. It is neither good nor bad. It is only human judgment and perception that create the stories of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. It is not what actually happened. If we focused only on what actually happened and left all the color out we could remain mostly neutral to the things that happen in our lives. But we don't do this. We instead add all kinds of color into our experiences. That's what gets us into trouble. The experiences themselves just are. It's the color that creates the pain we experience most of the time.

Let's begin with blame. Blame is the idea of holding somebody else responsible for what happened to you. There are many, many experiences that people have where somebody is doing something directly to them. It is easy and even logical to place blame in those scenarios. However, just because it is logical doesn't mean it's helpful. Much like it is logical to simply follow the GPS in your car, it may not be helpful if it leads you into a field in the middle of nowhere or lands you in a ditch. What we end up learning is how to override the GPS when we see that it's going to get us into trouble. We pay attention to the logic of the mind and decide whether that logic is helpful or not. Is the logic the mind is making up going to land me in the proverbial ditch or is it actually going to help me not tell the story of blame around this experience?

Blame puts the experience outside of you, makes somebody else responsible for it (rightly or wrongly), and more importantly, it takes away your control over how you feel about the experience. When you blame somebody for the experience, intentionally or unintentionally, we end up blaming them for how we feel about the experience. It's not just about what they said or did. Now it's about about how that

thing made you feel. The more you blame them, the less responsible you become for those feelings.

As time drags on and we get farther away from the experience, maybe that person is no longer in our life anymore, but we're still blaming them for how we feel 20 years later. Let's be really clear, how you feel now about something that happened 20 years ago has nothing to do with the person that did that thing 20 years ago. That's all about you and what you're doing with that experience in your mind. The story of blame has kept you stuck. You're still spinning that experience around in your head and you're still refusing to take responsibility for your own feelings because blame makes that easy for you to do. "If they hadn't done that thing I wouldn't feel this way." Whether that's a conscious thought or not, that's what's making you continue to spin it around in your head and blame somebody for it that isn't even present anymore.

When I tell people to let go of blame, they have a hard time with it because it means owning how they feel. Usually we don't own how we feel. We live by default. We're taught to live by default. Our emotions just simply blow in the wind. We feel however the world around us tells us to feel. We don't control our emotions and we don't actively think about them either. They just exist and we think we're stuck with them. We're always at the whim of our emotions. That means the idea of letting go of blame is scary because what it will require is being conscious of how we feel. When the mind spins up the memory that we still blame that person for, we have to be able to recognize the emotions that come with the memory and get control over them. We can't release any of the stories if we're unwilling to work on getting some control over our thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes we blame ourselves for things instead of projecting the blame outwards. What does that look like? It's the same thing we just talked about, it's just directed inward now. Blame in this scenario is just keeping us stuck in the story. We can't go back and change it. We can't fix it. So this is literally just taking the hammer we call blame and hitting ourselves over the head with it. It's not getting us anywhere. It's not solving anything. It's just us hurting ourselves. It needs to stop.

The way out of this loop is to realize that you can't go backward and change anything. You don't have a time machine. You have to be able to manage it from where you are. How do you that? By fixing your behavior in the present. What can you do from where you are now? It may be that you can't do anything about it. It just is going to be what it is. That's okay too, but let yourself off the hook.

The only thing you have control over is yourself in the present moment. You can't do anything about what happened even 5 minutes ago, let alone something that happened 20 years ago. So what are you going to do about it? How can you correct your behavior from where you are now? What can you do differently as you move forward? Those are really the only options you have. Everything else is just self punishment. That's not helpful. There is no point in keeping yourself in pain by holding onto blame that just makes you beat yourself up all the time. If you can't change it, then you have to learn to move on from it. It's just that simple.

* * *

Guilt is the feeling of knowing that what you did was bad or wrong. It's the idea that we shouldn't have done that thing. Often we tie this into blame because when we blame somebody for doing something, if they don't feel guilty for doing it, we get mad. We want people to feel this sense of guilt around their actions. But guilt is a story based on judgment. I think what you did was wrong and you should feel guilty for doing it because of this judgment that I have made about what you did.

Can you see that this is telling somebody how to feel about what they did? We can't make people feel anything. They simply feel how they feel. If they don't feel guilt or shame or blame or any of those emotions, it doesn't necessarily make them bad because those things are all stories anyway. They aren't necessarily true. We don't need to be telling those stories or feeling those feelings to change our behavior or to do something differently. Those feelings aren't retribution. They aren't punishment for things done wrong. These ideas are actually part of the problem. We try to make other people feel worse than we do, so we tell these stories to try to make other people feel guilty, hoping that the guilt is worse than whatever pain we may be experiencing. How is this helping?

If you get out of it for 5-minutes, you realize it doesn't help anything. It's not solving anything. We're not getting anywhere here. When the other person doesn't feel guilty, we make ourselves feel worse. Do you see that this doesn't help either? Why do we need people to feel certain emotions so that we can feel better? Why do we base our feelings on what other people are feeling or not feeling? Why do we tie this story of guilt into it?

It may be that the other person did something horrible. Maybe we can prove that factually and that's fine. But now what? How do you allow yourself to feel better regardless of what the other person is or isn't feeling or doing? Projecting guilt onto other people or trying to get people to feel a certain way, isn't going to solve your problem. You're going to have to unhook your thoughts and feelings from the other person. You are going to have to take full control over your own thoughts and feelings if you intend to feel better.

Guilt brings us down this rabbit hole of punishment because usually guilt is associated with somebody doing something wrong and being punished for it in some way. But let's talk about what punishment really is and why it too is actually a story that we like to tell.

Punishment is a form of artificial karma. Karma is the law of balance in the Universe. It plays out over the life of the soul or spirit, not the life of the human form the soul is currently residing within. When humans punish each other for things, regardless of how big or small those things are, what we are doing is creating more karma. What we think we're doing is creating balance because we play with this idea of consequences in real-time. When you do something, something else happens. Punishment is that, but in the negative sense.

The thing is, the idea of consequences creates karma that then plays out somewhere down the road. We don't know what we're responding to when we punish people for things. We don't know whether what has happened balanced some karma from 5 lifetimes ago or whether that person is now creating new karma that will play out in some other lifetime years from now. We are only playing

with our limited perception of what's happening in our own lifetimes. We don't have the larger picture. If we simply learned to leave everybody alone and let them do what they were going to do, karma would naturally balance, maybe not in our current lifetime, but it would balance. The Universe will always come back to center.

Yes, I just suggested we learn to allow chaos temporarily. Here's the thing with our reality, it is actually trying to balance. All the crap that comes up, all the things that you see happening around you, all the fear, pain, and anger are all part of creating that balance. We need all those things to be released if we intend to create harmony in the world. We can't get to a place of harmony without going through the chaos first. I promise you, this world is going to get a whole lot more challenging before it gets better. If we spend our time being bent on punishing everybody for everything, it just slows down the process. Karma is trying to play out and we're all busy interfering because we think we need to. We don't realize that there is natural balance that will be created if we simply stepped out of the way.

We want this instant gratification that comes from punishing people for things in the immediate. The Universe doesn't work like that and that's why I call it artificial karma, because it is just people pretending they know better than the Universe by attempting to punish other people for things they think are wrong. It's limited human perception and judgment playing out in the external world. It's not necessarily helpful or even true. These are all just stories that we tell to make ourselves feel better. If we all stepped back for a little bit we'd realize it doesn't help and we'd stop doing it.

If punishing people for things actually helped then the other person would be able to let go of the pain they experienced immediately. They would feel better. But that doesn't happen. The other person is punished and they still feel like crap. They still hold onto the pain. They still do the guilt trip thing. They still go down the rabbit hole. It isn't solving anything. So the idea of punishing people for things doesn't really have its intended effect. Punishment does not make people feel better.

Guilt is a story of trying to make other people feel a certain way so that we can feel better. It borders on emotional manipulation a lot of the time because of how we use it. It's still just a story and it's not true because the truth is simply that something happened. That's it. All experience is neutral. Something happened and we reacted badly because of our judgment of it. If we stopped telling the story, dealt with the pain that we felt without all the other stuff, and then let it go, we'd be fine. We wouldn't need guilt. We wouldn't have to play in that space. We play here because guilt is handy when we're trying to project our pain onto other people. It's just a convenient story and nothing more.

The guilt that we feel within ourselves is once again just us punishing ourselves. It's regret with an added boost. Regret just makes us feel bad. Guilt will make us actually punish ourselves because guilt gets associated with punishment. When we feel guilty for something we feel like we have to atone for it in some way. Regret doesn't usually come with that need to atone for our behavior. It's more of a feeling of sadness at not being able to fix something. Guilt isn't about fixing

anything, it's actually about atoning for things and even punishing ourselves for them. Guilt is a stronger emotion in some ways than regret is. Both will keep you stuck. Both will make you miserable. Guilt is just more likely to get you to take some sort of an action where regret may not.

These are stories that the mind uses to try to protect you from more pain. It actually creates more pain and keeps you in pain longer. But this is what we get taught to do so we do it, not realizing what it does. Owning our stuff means not projecting anything outward. It removes guilt as an option. You did a thing and I felt a certain way because of it. How I feel is not your responsibility regardless of what your action was. How I feel is up to me all the time regardless of what happens in my experience. When I can fully embody that, I can no longer play with blame, shame, guilt, or victimization. They are no longer options because I'm fully in control of me and it has nothing to do with you or my experiences.

Shame makes us want to hide what happened or hide what we did. Shame, unlike embarrassment, comes with this idea of self-punishment. It makes us want to punish ourselves for whatever happened. Shame is mostly an internal thing, although we do like to try to project it by telling people they should be ashamed of themselves. But much like with guilt, we can't really make anybody feel anything, so it's just a projection of how we're feeling about ourselves.

The story of shame is that we shouldn't have done what we did and we need to hide it. Again, we need to let ourselves off the hook here. It happened. You did it. You can't go back. You can't make it go away. You can't change it. It just is. So, what's with the hammer? The hammer is because of what we've been taught in relation to our actions. Usually this is old childhood stuff from parents, caregivers, or teachers. If they make you feel this sense of shame then maybe you won't do those things anymore. The truth behind this is that they felt shame and they were simply projecting it onto you. As a little kid, you probably picked it up quite willingly not realizing that it wasn't yours. That's what creates the cycle of shame that we find ourselves in as adults. It doesn't mean there is any reason to be ashamed of anything. It's a story that you tell because of what you picked up somewhere along the way. It's not true.

I used to hide all my problems. That was shame. I was taught indirectly that having problems wasn't okay and that I wasn't allowed to share those. My parents kept all their stuff to themselves because they were ashamed of having problems. Like any child does, I picked this up even though it wasn't mine. You don't need to read too much of what I write to know that I now share pretty much everything publicly on the Internet and in books. I learned to overcome the shame of being human by challenging the story through sharing my life experiences. Now, after sharing openly for a long time, there is no shame at all. I was able to release that story and you can too.

The way to release the story is to challenge it, whether that's just mentally challenging it or physically doing something to challenge it. I've done both and both work. I can rationalize myself out of my own thinking and that's works amazingly well because it focuses the brain differently. I've also actively challenged

it by doing things like writing about my life and the problems in it, and that also works because essentially it just allows us to prove it to ourselves. I knew shame didn't need to be a thing and I proved it to myself by challenging it.

All this takes courage. It takes a little bit of guts. It takes some awareness. You have to be willing to pay attention to what happens next. It doesn't have to be impossible. You don't have to stay stuck in the story. You just have to decide to change it or release it. Show yourself that it's not true and then accept that result when you see it.

If you tell people about something you're ashamed of, watch the reaction. Did the story you were telling yourself about how awful that experience was going to be play out the way you thought it would? What actually did happen? Are you still okay? The shame makes you feel like the world is going to end, but is that true? Probably not. When you can begin to realize that there is nothing to be ashamed of, then you can start to free yourself to challenge the story a little more.

It doesn't mean you have to come out with everything all on the same day. It just means that you can slowly begin to free yourself from that prison you keep yourself stuck in. Shame is just a prison where you hide your truth from other people. Why do that to yourself? Because somebody else told you that it was a good idea. Why did they think it was a good idea? Because they are also hiding things they are ashamed of. They projected it onto you and you picked it up. That's it. It's a fun little loop that we go around in, but the only way out is to challenge it and do something different. What are you going to do differently? When do you finally release the shame?

The final one is victimization. This one is probably the most common and the hardest to spot. The others are very emotionally based and easier to pick out. This is more a mental construct that doesn't necessarily make itself obvious. We see on social media the talk about making yourself a victim. What does that mean?

The underlying belief is that nothing in your life happens to you, it all happens for you. No matter how awful whatever the thing was that happened, it still happened for you not to you. We have experiences in our lives for only two reasons. The first is the conscious choice to have the experience. We decide we want to do something and we go do it. We have full control over these experiences and they are intentional. The second type of experience is the unconscious experience. We have we don't have control over these experiences and we don't ask for these experiences. They happen one of two ways, either because we've created them unconsciously out of the patterns and habits we've been talking about or because the spirit self decided we needed to have the experience.

The unconscious experience is pretty much every experience you've ever had in your life, from the things that were just bothersome or annoying to you to the very tragic things that happen and everything in between. All of it serves a purpose. You are a victim of none of it. All of it can be learned from if you're willing to do the work within yourself.

If you can get out of it for a minute what you'll see is that the blame, shame, and guilt are stories of victimization. Blame is the story of somebody doing something

to you that you didn't like. Shame is the story of covering up things and making yourself a victim of them. Guilt is also a story of being a victim and feeling bad because of it. None of these things are true.

I'll say it again, all experience is neutral. It is only human judgment and ego that causes any of this to take place. It is possible to get out of most of it without transcending your ego doing anything crazy. It is possible to calm the mind so that it doesn't tell the stories. Honestly, it's the ego that wants to make you a victim. Why?

Because the ego wants to identify with the experience. It wants to take it on and wear it like a costume. By doing that it creates the sense of victimization that you feel. The ego makes you feel out of control because it wants control of every tiny little thing. Can you control what other people do in traffic? No. Is there something that you could heal within yourself that would stop that? Probably not. Does that mean you need to victimize yourself with it or take it personally? No. But you do it, don't you? Why do you do it? Because you allow the ego to tell the story and you don't control the thinking that you have.

When you learn to control the thinking, the ego can't tell the story anymore. When the stories stop, it stops mattering what's happening around you because you're no longer bothered by it. You're only bothered by it because you tell a story about it and you make yourself a victim of it. If you realized that you weren't a victim and you didn't need to tell the story, it wouldn't bother you anymore. You do it completely out of habit and you don't think about it. Rational thought is showing you how ridiculous this is as you read it, but you probably never paid attention until now. How many other places in your life do you do this to yourself?

A friend cancels plans, maybe they've done it multiple times in a row. Is it possible that the other person just doesn't want to hang out? Maybe they are having a rough time. Maybe there is something going on you don't know about. How do you react to this? Do you get all up in your stuff? Are you bothered by it? What if instead of assuming the person was just being a jerk, you asked them if they were okay? Even if they don't admit to anything, is it possible that they are avoiding it? Maybe they are not ready to talk. How we interpret the actions of others determines whether we feel bothered or victimized by what other people do. Can you see the pain here? Is it a problem to you that they aren't admitting that yet?

This is a loop we get into. Some people are not willing to help themselves. We can't make them no matter how much we want to, we can't make them help themselves. So we have to accept them where they are. That's hard. It's hard to watch other people be in pain. It's hard to feel like your hands are tied and there is nothing you can do. But this is part of the human experience. Learning how to leave people where they are is an important but difficult skill to learn. When we can accept people where they are, we don't take things like canceling plans over and over again personally. We don't have to be a victim of that anymore. We simply see and acknowledge the pain in others and we don't create pain within ourselves because of it. We free ourselves to be okay even while others are struggling.

For quite a while, I used the analogy of a tow truck trying to pull somebody out

of the mud. The tow truck is no help if it gets stuck too. The tow truck will not join you in the mud. It just won't. It can't help you from there. The same is true for you with the people around you. When you learn that you can't help people by jumping into the mud with them and that empathy doesn't mean you have to feel what they feel, then you can learn how to stay on the side of the mud and help from a distance. This is called maintaining energetic boundaries. It's something we all need to learn to do so that we can stop being a victim of everybody else's pain.

People unconsciously and unintentionally throw pain around all the time. When they tell you not to do something it's because they wouldn't do it themselves or because they had a bad experience with it and they are triggered by it. The minute you recognize that when people offer their opinions of things, it's usually from a place of pain, you stop taking everything on. You need to look for people that will support you in what you're doing.

Again, we're back to the skydiving analogy I like to use. If you want to go skydiving, you don't go talk to a bunch of people that are going to tell you that you're crazy for jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. You're going to go find the people that will support you in doing what you want. The same is true with anything that you do in your life. Find the people that are willing to support you on your journey.

That doesn't mean that you only take on positive feedback. It doesn't mean that you have to ignore what others are telling you. It does mean that you need to recognize the pain of other people and filter for that when you talk to them. Are they telling me this because it's true and that's how it's going to work out for me or are they telling me this because they are in pain? Are they handing you pain or truth? The truth, by the way, is never painful because the truth just is. If the truth is hard to hear it's not because it's painful, it's because there is something there that you haven't accepted about yourself yet. Find that thing and accept it and then the pain will resolve itself.

It's all about learning to sort out what you see in your experience. Can you recognize pain in others? Can you see the general patterns and habits that show up in other people? It's not about judging anyone. People have all kinds of crazy patterns and habits and it's fine. There nothing wrong with anyone. What recognizing it does is it allows you to sort out what's yours and what's not. It allows you to have a better filter on your life so you're not picking up so much clutter. You probably don't go to garage sales and buy everything people are selling, but we have a tendency to do this in our lives in other ways. We don't filter out pain and so we end up buying everything other people are offering. It creates a lot of clutter that weighs us down. A better filter keeps you from doing that. It is an energetic boundary that allows you to determine what energy you keep because it's yours and what you filter out because it doesn't belong to you.

These are all energetic boundaries. When you're having conversations with people and they are projecting pain through their words, what they are doing is throwing energy around. That's why I call it throwing snowballs. The snowballs are energy. What you're learning to do is not allow those snowballs to stick. You let them fall to the ground. You have that energetic shield in place so that you don't have to be bothered with other people's stuff. That doesn't mean we can't be

compassionate or empathetic, it just means we don't take it on ourselves. Learning to filter energy appropriately is how we learn to be okay in our experience, even while being surrounded with people that are throwing their pain all over the place. We don't have to live in isolation, we just have to learn how to manage the energy that other people toss around. We take control of ourselves within the experience partially by learning to manage energy better and partially by breaking the patterns and habits that we used as coping mechanisms and created out of pain, so that we can live a life we actually enjoy.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
The Thinking Problem

We need talk about what's going on in the mind. The mind is one of those crazy places to hang out. It's got all kinds of awesome stuff going on and it has a tendency to keep us stuck because it is trying to protect us. The job of the mind is to keep your body alive and to keep you safe from harm. It does its' best to make sure you don't get hit by a bus every time you leave your house. It doesn't want you to suffer in pain, so it will attempt to make up stories about what's going on so that you'll feel better. It will even block out certain experiences when the pain is too much in an effort to help make sure you survive the trauma. The brain is both miraculous in what it does for us and our bodies and it is also out of control chaos. Both can be true at the same time and it is totally okay.

Your brain is probably going a mile a minute, right? Does it ever stop? Can you even get it to stop talking? This is the out of the control nature of the mind. The mind spins and spins and spins and you have no control over it. It does whatever it wants whenever it wants and you are just along for the ride. You are a captive audience to your own mind. This alone makes your mind a chaotic place to hang out. Do you want control? Do you want to learn how to get control? It is possible. I've done it and I want to show you how to do it for yourself.

I talk sometimes about dealing with the thing that screams the loudest first. Why? Because the thing that is yelling the loudest is the thing that's on repeat in your head. It won't quit. It doesn't go away. The story gets bigger and better with every passing thought, and you seemingly can't do anything about it. It appears to be out of your control. But do want to know something? It's not out of your control.

When the thing screams in your head it's your job to pay attention to it. You are actually listening to your mind. You are not your mind. You are the audience for your mind. That means you have the power of rationalization. You have the power of deciding what's playing in your head. You get to choose the movie. You own this theater and it's your job to decide what's playing. Generally people are not taught that they can control the crazy in their minds. We are typically taught to go with it and even buy into it. Usually, that's where we get into trouble.

So, when the thing screams what do you do? Pay attention to the thought and you question it just like you would a politician presenting their platform. Question those thoughts actively all the time. Are they true? Are they based on pain? Is it a story? How do you know? Can the mind prove it based on what's happening around you right now? If it reaches either into the past or future even if the future is in 5 minutes, it's not true right now. The mind can't prove anything. It doesn't know what's going to happen in 5 minutes. It can guess but it doesn't actually know. That means it's just projecting and the thought isn't true. It's a story that the mind made up.

When you stop accepting these types of thoughts the mind will stop giving you these thoughts. If you argue with your mind when it presents this craziness to you, you're engaging with it and that means it will keep doing it. You can't argue with it. The idea is to reject it, not engage by arguing with it, and then move on. The less you engage with the craziness the better. The thoughts stop because you're no longer an audience participant. Your brain doesn't want to talk to itself. It wants an audience and you're it. So if you get up and leave the theater it'll change the movie to try to get your attention again.

The brain is amazing and it's also sneaky. What you need to see is that it's going to keep trying to come in the back door because it thinks that this is its job and it wouldn't know what to do if it wasn't doing this. The brain is a muscle, a very, very useful muscle, that you need to gain some control over and learn how to use properly. As you continue to shut down the out of control mind one repeating thought at a time, it will start to calm down. It will stop spinning.

Because you're the audience to your own mind, you can re-direct your mind anytime you want to. At first even I'll admit that it's kind of like re-directing a determined toddler away from danger. It requires a little bit of focus and attention. Your persistence will pay off though and your mind will eventually begin to allow you to re-direct it more easily. At first it'll fight for control because it's very used to being charge of things and when it realizes it won't be in charge anymore it'll get a little grumpy. Understand though, that this serves a purpose. It forces you to actually pay attention to your thoughts and that's a good thing.

I get that at first it seems really overwhelming. Paying attention to a racing mind seems exhausting just thinking about it. But the truth is that your mind is creating some of the pain that you're experiencing. One of the ways that we can begin to feel without actually changing anything outside of ourselves, is by getting a grip on the mind.

So, if the mind isn't in control, then who or what is? Your consciousness or awareness takes over. You can call this whatever you want. It can be your higher self, your spirit guides, your God, your soul, or any other name you want. My personal belief is that we are spirit or soul first and human second. What that means to me is that my job is to learn to stop trying to control everything. My job is to learn how to trust my spirit self and the direction that it wants to take me in.

Don't get me wrong, we're not transcending any egos. We're not trying to do away with the human form here. What we're learning how to do is tame the ego and specifically the mind, just a little so that we can hear and actually follow the

guidance our spirit self is offering us.

The thing with the spirit self is that it doesn't play along with the human rules so well. It kind of wants to do its own thing. That can be challenging sometimes because it doesn't fit into the seemingly logical way we've been taught to live. It doesn't offer us advice that fits into our comfort zones. It doesn't usually give us all the information first either. It tends to tell us to just do the thing and see what happens. There's a level of trust that has to be present. The other thing that has to happen is that you have to be able to quiet the mind to even contemplate following the spirit self's directions. Why? Because if the direction isn't logical or comfortable, the mind will have a fit and it will trap you in fear, worry, and doubt. It will keep you stuck.

I'm not making the mind out to be a bad thing because it definitely serves a purpose. But in this scenario we need the ability to move forward freely. We have to be able to override the mind. That's almost impossible to do when your mind is still spinning out of control. Learning to gain some control makes this whole thing easier. There's something else here too because in order to create what you actually want, you have to be able to line up with it in terms of your thoughts and feelings. This is simple manifesting 101. If you can't manifest because your mind is going a thousand miles an hour in the wrong direction and you're scared to death, then following your spirit self is going to be even more difficult. Learning to control the mind is one of the major steps in creating the life you want.

So far, I've given you a whole bunch of logic to use to help yourself in this process. I've shown you how to recognize the stories you're telling. We've talked about the feelings, we've talked about time, we've had all of these discussions, but now they actually need to be put into practice. One of the first steps is to begin to control the racing mind. You have to stop the run away train.

What if the mind is generating some of the fear and anxiety you feel? What if by controlling the thoughts a little better you could actually release some of the emotion you feel? What if the emotion is just tied to the thoughts? What if by controlling the thoughts you can also control some of the emotion?

This doesn't work every time. Sometimes the emotion sneaks in there anyway even without a conscious thought and that's okay. What we're looking for here are the emotions the mind is creating consciously. How much of the pain or fear or doubt you experience in your day-to-day life has nothing to do with your external experience but actually has everything to do with the thoughts in your head? Can you tell the difference?

I felt a thousand times better without changing anything outside of myself, just by getting control over the mind and some of the emotions. I didn't make any major changes to my life but because my mind was under control and because I had tamed the tigers of fear and doubt, I was able to relax for the first time in over 20 years. My life externally is far from perfect, but I've learned to be okay within myself by doing this work this way.

The mind is telling you stories. It's narrating your life but it's adding a lot of color. What's the color? Emotions, drama, and interpretation. When the mind doesn't understand why people are doing things, it makes stuff up. It invents

reasons why to create understanding, like that person must hate us or they were out to get us, or something like that. Those kinds of interpretations create stories of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. If they are out to get us, we're a victim. Being a victim is a whole story about all the things that people do to us because they don't like us. It adds all kinds of drama and fear that makes things really colorful and interesting. It would make a great full length feature film, but it will also keep you in pain and stuck for the rest of your life.

What if the person was just throwing pain around and it had nothing to do with you? What if the story that your mind just made up with all the drama isn't actually true? You buy in hook, line, and sinker because you don't pay attention to your thoughts. They ramble on and you're not even aware of it. They make up these crazy stories and you're down that rabbit hole faster than Alice in Wonderland chasing the bunny. For what? Where is this getting you? How is this solving your problem?

It's not solving your problem, is it? It's actually creating one for yourself because now you have to defend yourself. Now the ego gets involved in defending and protecting itself from a made-up story of the mind. It invented a problem to solve, which is cool! The mind loves a good problem and when it's out of control it'll make up all kinds of them to give itself something to do. Instead of solving imaginary problems, why not spend your time getting control of the craziness?

You know that problem you think you have? What if it isn't what you think it is? What if those problems in the outside world are actually projections of your own thoughts and feelings? What if you had more control over that than you think you do?

It's actually crazy how many problems just kind of disappeared from my world when I stopped thinking all those crazy thoughts. Things that I used to perceive as major issues in my life were suddenly minor things, most of which resolved themselves without me doing very much of anything at all. Life just didn't have to be the big crazy, hairy deal I made it out to be. Life could be simpler than it was. The only thing I had to do to create that was control my thoughts and feelings in a way that would allow me to see the truth in my life without all the stories and extra emotions. The experiences weren't nearly as challenging as my mind wanted me to think they were. The deal is, you can't see that until you stop over-thinking everything.

I can hear everybody from here telling me that their stories are true and that they have proof. You don't have to email me about it because I get it. That person did that thing or that bill is due or this will happen if I don't do that. Yes, those things are real. I understand that. Does your worry and fear and over-thinking solve the problem? If the answer is no, then why do you let it wreck your day, week, month, or year? If it isn't in your control and there is nothing you can do about it, then drop it. Just drop it. You can't fix it. It's not in your control. Stop letting it wreck your life. It's just there. It just is and it is okay as it is.

I have sat on my hands and let things happen, terrified of what the result would be, so that I could learn that it wasn't as bad as my mind had made it out to be. I learned that lesson so that I could relax. I learned that lesson so that I could chill

and take a breath and not spend my life in stress, fear, and anxiety. I learned that things would simply work out, maybe not the way I wanted them to, but they would work out. It would be okay. What if that is true for you too?

There's a trick to this though because I had to get to a place where I wasn't making up stories about what was happening. I had to be willing to recognize where I was without the story. Whatever the outcome was, I had to be okay with it. I had to just simply accept it and not argue with it. Not only did I not argue with it, I questioned it. I allowed myself the opportunity to logically understand what was happening and why without the stories of drama the mind wants to create. What happened was that I learned how to see my reality differently. I actually became more accepting of what was happening. It allowed me to release a lot of the control that I thought I needed. By creating acceptance without stories and drama, I could see things clearly. It tweaked my perception so that I wasn't looking at trouble all the time, I was looking at truth.

When something happens, where is your focus? Are you immediately focused on problem-solving or just problems in general? Do you see how that is a problem in itself? It means that if there isn't a solution and it's not in our control then the mind is going to obsess about it. The mind will spin until either something happens or a solution is created. When we learn how to not argue with it by simply accepting that the problem is going to be there, then we don't have to let the mind spin. The mind is then free to do other things that are more useful to us. Then we can see that if we untie ourselves from all the things we can't fix, it frees us up to do the things that would potentially fix the problems.

Here's the loop that I got caught in for a long time. I wanted to write a full-length book like this but money was an issue, there were other problems that had my attention. I couldn't control or fix those other problems. There was nothing I could do about them but I wasn't in a place yet where I could just accept them as they were and leave them there. So instead, I wrote books that were much shorter so that I could write them in a matter of a few weeks and get them out. I didn't feel like I had the time to put into writing longer books because I needed to solve all these problems I didn't have the power to solve. Most of my previous books were somewhere between 50 and 100 pages or so. This book will be somewhere around 250 to 300 pages when done.

The solution to the problems was in the work that I wanted to do that I didn't feel like I had the time to focus on because I was distracted by all the things. I wasn't allowing myself to work on the solution because I was focusing on problems. What if the solution for you is the stuff you're avoiding because you're busy focusing on problems?

The solution here is very simple. It's not about solving the problems at all. It's actually about controlling your thinking around what's going on. It's re-directing your brain away from its focus on problems. It is about showing the mind that it doesn't need to babysit the problems. The problems can be there and they aren't suddenly going to sneak attack if we turn our attention away and focus on other things. Your focus on other things is what will give you the solution you're looking for.

Let's be really clear here that the solution may not be what you want. It may not be that the bill gets paid. It may not be that the other person stops doing whatever it is. It may not be what you want, but it will be the way it needs to be. Your job is to understand why it turned out the way it did without the stories of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. There is another truth that is far less painful than whatever it is you're telling yourself right now. Your job is to go find that truth.

What did I find when I released all the stories? What did I find when I stopped using fear, doubt, worry, and stress as excuses and I went looking for truth? The truth I found was that me and all the people around me were wounded in their own ways. Everybody was throwing their own pain around. Sometimes it seemed as though we were in the wrong place at the wrong time and caught some unintentional crossfire, but every single time the pain was not mine. When I dropped the pain of other people and let them all off the hook, I was just left with a bucket load of pain that was my own making. Honestly, there was nothing scary there.

When I worked with people I had a question on my application form that asked people what they were afraid of finding in the process of healing. Almost consistently, people were afraid of learning that they were awful human beings, that everything was their fault, and that they weren't redeemable in some way. Those fears are ego-based. They are based on this idea that we are responsible for all the pain we see around us, our own and other people's pain. That's just not true. Other people already had their own pain. You aren't responsible for everybody's everything, you just aren't.

What I found was that the pain had made me do things and make choices, that if I had been working from a more healed place, I would never have done. But that revelation doesn't make me a bad human being, it actually just makes me human. Yes, I worked from a ton of pain for a long time but that doesn't mean that somehow I'm not okay. It doesn't mean that I can't stop living from that pain now. It doesn't mean that I have to stay in that pain for the rest of my life. I don't need to punish myself. My control is from where I am. When I heal it allows me to make better choices, change my behavior, and maybe even take responsibility for past actions where I can. That's the benefit of healing.

We don't go looking for truth to give ourselves an excuse to beat ourselves up some more. We go looking for truth so that we can stop beating ourselves up. We do this to free ourselves from all this stuff we hang on to. You're not going to find anything horrible in this process. You're just going to find that you're human and you made some mistakes. You're just like everybody else.

The fear is the fear of the unknown. Who am I or who will I be? What will I find? The logical mind doesn't know so it fills in the blanks. These are the kinds of things it fills in. I'm going to learn I'm horrible. I'm going to learn that I messed up so badly that I can't fix. I'm going to learn that I deserve to burn in hell. This is the mind creating these stories to help protect you from what it thinks is just more pain. But it's not more pain. It's the release of pain.

Who will you be afterward? You'll be you without all the pain. My personality didn't change dramatically in this process. I'm still just quirky, weird me. My sense

of humor didn't go anywhere. I didn't suddenly morph into somebody totally new. I became more of what I already was in a way that wasn't based on pain. I dug up the parts of me that I'd buried and found that they added to what I already had, they didn't take away anything. What did I lose? The pain and the habits and patterns I had that came from that pain. I lost the need to make everybody happy all the time. For some people, it probably did change how they saw me, but honestly, it just allowed me to actually have relationships with people that were healthy. It allowed me to say what I needed or wanted. It allowed me to have an opinion. That doesn't mean I need to be a jerk. It just means that I'm allowed to speak my truth now. Does that change my personality dramatically? No. It allows me to be me freely. That's the point. That's what this is all about.

I freed myself to be myself with honesty and integrity instead of being locked up and trapped in a bunch of pain. The pain meant my actions and words weren't true to me most of the time. I get to use that weird and warped personality now to show up in the world as myself without all the baggage. I don't have to throw pain around. I don't have to pick up other people's pain. I can just be in the world and be okay. The freedom that comes in that is something that's really hard to explain in words because it's just so different from how most of the world operates.

What I really want you to see is that most of the work that I did was in my head because the things that I was freeing myself from were ideas and stories. The emotional pain that I felt wasn't because of what had happened in my life, the majority of it came from my own mind. I created my own pain. My life was far from perfect. People were busy throwing their own pain around. I was bullied. I was emotionally abused in many ways. But those experiences came and went. The pain created from those experiences was what I hung onto and consequently punished myself with for years. It's not their fault that I hung onto the pain. That was my own doing. Do you see the separation there? The only thing they are responsible for is the original action or actions. Everything after that is up to me. If I choose to perceive what they do as painful, that's on me not them. I did perceive it as painful and I carried it around for a lot of years. But I can't blame them for that. That is my doing.

My job is to own my feelings and my reactions or responses to everything that happens around me. Taking control and owning how I feel means not blaming others for how I feel because of what they do or don't do. I let them off the hook and freed myself all in the same moment. It all happened at the same time the minute I understood that they couldn't make me feel anything that I didn't choose to feel.

The pain I felt at the time was meant to be felt and released. It was not meant to be hung onto. Fully releasing it means letting everybody off the hook and not telling those stories of blame, shame, guilt, and victimization. There is nothing for the pain to hook itself to when you don't tell those stories. The ego can't identify with the pain because you don't let it have anything to identify with. You take the hook away when you stop telling the stories. I've simply removed the option of identifying with pain from my life. It doesn't mean that I'll never have another painful experience again. It just means I won't identify with it, so I'll heal and release. It's like catch and release fishing, only with your emotions.

The stories are the mind games we play with ourselves. I didn't actively have to do anything with the events themselves or even the people involved in those events. What I had to do was unravel my thinking. I unwound all the stories that I was telling. The hardest part of that process was getting okay with owning everything that I could no longer blame on other people because that meant I had to accept my behavior as my own. I had to accept that I was acting from pain and that it caused me to do things that I wasn't necessarily proud of. I got to accept that it was okay to be human. My journey wasn't meant to be perfect. It was meant to lead me to exactly where I am. I'm here now because I have accepted these things. Not only do I accept them for myself, I accept them in others too. That allows me to remove a lot of the judgment from my life because I'm willing to see when people are making choices from pain and I'm willing to accept that.

What do they mean when they say you create your own reality? I want to give you my interpretation of this phrase because I think it's important in understanding how this whole thing works.

The things that are going on around you just are. Often we are limited in terms of our control of them. Sometimes things happen directly to us that we don't want and probably don't have control over. People have some horrific experiences in their lives. If I'm really honest with you right here, it's not about the experiences. It's about what we do with them within ourselves.

We want to make it about the experience. We want to focus outside of ourselves because that's what we're taught to do. But that's not where the truth is found. That's not really reality. It's a stage. It's a scene in a movie. It's a moment in time. It's just there. Yes we can move the furniture around. We can evict people from our lives. We can turn up the heat or turn down the air conditioning. But there are many things out there that we simply don't have control over and that we just have to be okay with.

Your reality is created not by what's going on around you or your control over or lack of control over what happens around you, but by what you do with your reality within yourself. Your entire reality is within you. What do you see when you look around you? What's your interpretation of your life? That interpretation has determined your reality. You're either okay with it or you're not and it's totally dependent on your interpretation of what's happening and your focus in that moment.

Is my life perfect? Hell no! But I'm not focused on what's happening around me. It's just there and I can't fix it, change it, control it, or do anything about it. So I just learned to get okay with it. It doesn't mean that I'm not actively working to create change. I'm just not arguing with reality. I am creating my own reality by deciding consciously what I allow to affect me within myself. I've created a good life for myself because I'm able to be okay within myself. I don't need my external reality to change for that to be true. I'm not projecting my well-being out into the world. The world does not affect my well-being.

My well-being is within me. I know that it sounds really selfish. We are taught to focus on the problems and the chaos in the world. We are taught at the same time,

that if we don't take on all that stuff that we are being irresponsible or selfish. Have you ever questioned this idea? Can you see how this idea keeps you in pain because it constantly makes you take on the pain of others that you don't have control over?

When you look around you and you come across something you don't like, what do you do with it within yourself? Do you pick it up and make yourself feel crappy? Do you leave the pain over there because you recognize it's not yours and there is nothing you can do with it? Do you just ignore it entirely? There is nothing wrong with watching the news. It's what you do with what you see on the news that matters. You have to leave the pain over there. You can't let that affect your well-being. You have to create that energetic emotional boundary.

When you take it on, you create a reality for yourself that is painful. When you recognize it as not yours and nothing you can fix and you learn to leave the pain over there, then you create a reality for yourself that includes well-being. Again, it doesn't mean you can't have empathy and compassion because they don't require us to pick up other people's pain and lose our own sense of well-being. It just means we're staying stable within ourselves at all times. Our reality within ourselves can remain stable even when the world is rocking and rolling. Not to be another dooms-day predictor, but your ability to be stable within yourself is going to be critical as we move forward. The world is going to get really bumpy and if you can't manage that within yourself in a way that allows you to be okay, this is going to be a very difficult ride.

You create your own reality means you decide what to think, feel, and do with everything you see happening around you. You decide whether you want to tell the stories of blame, shame, guilt, or victimization. You decide whether you want to hang onto pain or not. You decide whether to pick up other people's pain. You decide your opinion and what you think about what's going on. Everything is your choice.

The truth is there is nothing outside of you. Your well-being is inside of you only. If your well-being is hinged on what's happening around you then you are creating a crappy reality for yourself. You are in a constant state of needing things to change so you can be okay. Those changes may or may not ever happen. If they don't happen, then you stay miserable. For what? Why do you stay miserable? Because you've hinged your well-being on things outside of yourself that you can't necessarily change right now or even take control of.

The biggest thing you can do for yourself is learn to find your internal well-being and unhook it from anything and everything that's going on around you. We're not taking out compassion and empathy. This isn't about tuning out everything and living in a bubble. This is about learning how to protect your well-being. It's about understanding that you don't have to take everything in. You don't have to project yourself into the pain of others. It doesn't matter whether it's your best friend or you're watching the news about some natural disaster on the other side of the world, it's not yours and so you simply let it be there.

There is acceptance with this. Can you see it? It's the acceptance of other people and their journeys. It's the acceptance of the idea that other people will experience

pain and it is not our job to protect them from it, feel it for them, or take it away from them. It is our job to honor the journey of the other by honoring the pain. Understanding that we can't fix things for people. We can't fix other people either. Everybody gets to have their own journey their own way. Our job is only to honor and respect that.

You can be supportive, compassionate, kind, and caring, and still allow others to live their lives and have their own experiences. They aren't mutually exclusive. We can do both at the same time. That was my job when I used to work with people. I couldn't fix their lives for them. I couldn't make them do anything. I had to allow them to follow their own path their own way. If they took on what I offered them fine and if they didn't fine and if they struggled so they ended up somewhere in the middle, that's okay too. I know what you're thinking. They are "just clients". You don't care about them the same I do my best friend, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, or mother. The extra attachment you feel to those closest to you makes you more willing to pick up their pain. It means you're more willing to sacrifice your well-being for them. Here's the interesting thing about that scenario. While in some relationships taking on each other's pain is at least somewhat balanced, in many other relationships is quite lopsided and creates resentment.

There's a story being told here though and that is that we have to pick up the pain of the people we care about most. We made this idea a requirement in pretty much every relationship we have whether it's romantic, friendships, family, even co-workers in some cases. It literally causes us to sacrifice ourselves for others. We believe that to be the cost of admission to a relationship. What if that stuff is all bunk? What if all that does is make both of you miserable? What if that doesn't actually solve anything?

We need to stop telling ourselves the story that we need to be miserable just like everybody else and that being miserable with people is the way to show you care about them. Those aren't true and all they do is cause you pain. You can be compassionate and empathetic without picking up other people's stuff. That is the work. It is to learn how to stay on the sidelines of other people's pain while still supporting them in the journey.

The journey just is. It's going to be what it is and it remains a neutral thing. Everything that happens along the way serves a purpose. It is our job to honor the journey while finding the truth in the experiences. To do that effectively, we have to stay out of the stories and drama that the mind creates. We have to be able to step out of it and see what's really happening.

It's not about making up a reality that doesn't exist. It's not about denying reality either. It's simply about not adding in the extra stuff that we want to put in there. It's like somebody telling you to make a recipe exactly as it's written. But you can't resist adding extra vanilla, or if you're me extra garlic because that's just what you do when you cook or bake. What if the things you were adding in weren't necessarily good or didn't make the recipe better? What if I put garlic in the chocolate cake or vanilla in the spaghetti sauce? Adding the "wrong" thing to the "wrong" recipe creates a problem, it makes things not taste good.

The wisdom to know that vanilla doesn't belong in spaghetti sauce comes from

experience and learning. The wisdom to know that adding in a bunch of emotion and stories doesn't make the journey easier, comes from living in a journey that has been filled with the pain the emotions and stories cause. The understanding that we are free to not put vanilla in the spaghetti sauce and that we don't have to tell stories and add extra emotion to everything that happens, is what frees us from some of the pain that we experience. How much of the pain that you experience on a daily basis is from your lived experience and how much of it is just mentally created? Can you even tell the difference?

It's amazing to me how much emotion dropped away just by getting a grip on my thinking. I realize how much pain I had put myself in that had nothing to do with anything that was going on around me. It wasn't attached to anything outside of my own thoughts.

The next piece I discovered was that there were some emotional habits in place. Once I got control of the thinking, I discovered that some of the emotions were still there. They were happening anyway. That's called habit. The emotion was being triggered without a conscious thought. My job at that point was to engage logical and rational thought to release the extra emotion so that I didn't have to stay in that emotional pain.

The emotions were coming up as a result of triggers in my external world. The external world just is and I couldn't control what was happening around me, so the extra emotion wasn't solving anything. It amounted to a trauma response of sorts. But the thing is that I didn't need to be traumatized. I'm not a victim. There was no reason to do that or to allow to keep happening. There wasn't really anything going on. Allowing the external world to upset my internal balance didn't make sense, it wasn't necessary, so I taught myself how to unhook from those external triggers and kicked the emotional habit.

I'll remind you again that I'm not dealing with mental health issues. There is no major trauma happening. This stuff is all old and I've already processed the past events that created all these patterns and habits that I've been breaking. While this isn't how you would handle PTSD, for example, this is one way to handle old mental and emotional patterns and habits that are no longer working for you. It's a way to bust out of some pain that you've found yourself stuck in. It won't work for everybody and please don't try to make it fit if it doesn't work for you. Do what you need to do to take care of yourself. You are your own best advocate. Trust your instincts around the methods I'm offering you.

Why do I call this stuff a habit? When the same thing is continually triggered in your environment your response to it becomes a habit. If every month you stress about paying the bills, your response to the end of the month is the same whether you need to stress or not. You could have hundreds of thousands of dollars in the bank, but if you are used to being stressed about the end of the month, you will feel that stress anyway. That's a habit that has nothing to do with what's happening around you. It's like drooling at the sight of food. It's just an automatic response that doesn't even require a conscious thought to initiate.

That understanding right there is what allows you to step back from your

experience, see that your reality isn't really showing you the old pattern, and that you're still responding as if the old pattern is present. Now you have a habit to break. Can you see that for yourself or are you busy defending the problem? In the case of stressing at the end of the month, the argument would be that the money may disappear or that you may not be able to make more or that somebody might steal your bank card. Those stories of potential problems that aren't happening are what I call defending the problem. You're defending your stress response based on what could be previous experience or just stories you've made up in your head of things that have never happened to you. You defend the emotion instead of recognizing that you are safe and that the thoughts and feelings are not helpful to you. This is showing me a commitment to a problem you don't even have. Where are you doing this in your own life? It's time to break these habits and let this stuff go. What are you going to start with right now?

CHAPTER TWELVE
Your Energy Matters

Energy is everything and everything is energy.

Yes, I'm sure you've heard that phrase many times in your spiritual travels. But what does that mean and how is energy affecting you in your life?

First, you are a walking ball of energy. You have an energy body around you. It extends out about the length of your arm all the way around your body, even under your feet into the ground below. That energy body or field is attracting and repelling everything around you.

Everything around you is also energy, from the chair you're sitting on to read this, to the place you live, the things you have in your home, and the larger world around you including the earth below your feet, the rocks, trees, and other beings and creatures you're surrounded by. Absolutely everything has its' own energetic field or frequency that you can tap into at any time. I've said before that rocks and trees talk and this is why, it's because I can tune into the energetic frequency of any object or being that I want to, whether we consider it to be animate or inanimate in nature.

What that means for you in your home is that everything around you has absorbed your energy and the energy of the people you live with. Have you ever wondered why some spaces don't feel good even though there is nothing happening? That's energy. The energy needs to be cleared and then the space will feel better.

Both new and used items carry an energetic frequency. Consider that if you shop at thrift stores and garage sales, you are picking up the energy of whomever previously owned that object. If you're buying new, you're picking up the energy of whomever has touched or manufactured that item. There's nothing wrong with this, it's just something to be mindful of if you're energy sensitive. Make sure you ask your guides to clear the objects for you, or you clear them yourself before you take them home.

Your thoughts, feelings, and words are energy, too. These are all powerful tools that we use every single day to communicate with each other and navigate the world around us. They also shape the life we live in ways that we don't necessarily

think about all the time.

Thoughts and feelings are pulled from what I like to think of as a giant universal bin of every thought and feeling that has or will ever exist in any human past, present, or future. It's the biggest bulk bin in existence and it works based on the principles of the Law of Attraction. We attract thoughts and feelings much the same way we attract anything else. Generally your thoughts and feelings are brought to you based on your previous thoughts or feelings and whatever you happen to be focusing on at that moment, good or bad. Much like with anything else you attract though, you do have control over this. You have the power to interject into this never-ending stream and decide what to do with it. This is our point of control over our internal well-being. Learning how to manage this is how we can be happier in our lives even if nothing around us physically changes.

When you have a thought you are in control of what happens next. You don't think you are because you don't pay enough attention to what your brain is doing. If you don't pay attention then that thought energy will attract more of the same type of thought. If you are paying attention though, you get to choose. Is this helpful? Do I want to think about this more? If not, then you have the power to stop your brain from pulling in more thoughts like the previous one. Your point of control is in your awareness of what's happening in your mind.

Ever wondered why your mind won't shut up and it keeps talking about the same thing over and over again? This is why. Your thoughts are energy and they are attracting more of the same every single time. Gaining energetic control is not only about the bigger energy field that surrounds your human form, it's also about gaining control over the thought energy that your brain is working with. Your ability to interject and question the thought gives you control of the energy you're bringing in.

The thought energy you have affects your entire energy field. That's why your thoughts can make you feel like crap. It's all energetically tied together. What you do with one affects the other. You're learning to get control over the whole system, not just one aspect of it. Gaining control of your thoughts won't help you if you are still an emotional mess because you haven't dealt with anything. Gaining control of your emotions won't help you if your brain runs wild because your mind will continue to create new emotions with every thought. Your larger energy field will be out of whack if either of those two aren't managed. All of these things are also affected by your interactions with other people, which we'll talk about in a moment.

Why do we start with the brain first? Because that's the control room. It's where all the action is happening. Having control over the mind gives you the ability to acknowledge and work through the extra emotions. Often, thoughts come with emotions attached. So, if we have control over the thinking then there is a whole set of emotions we're no longer dealing with. That makes the whole thing easier to manage because we have fewer thoughts and less emotion. When we learn to pay attention to our thinking, then we begin to filter and control the energy we're taking on. We are energetic magnets, we're attracting and repelling all kinds of things all the time. It's about filtering and understanding what's being attracted or repelled and why.

When we can learn to pay attention to what the brain is bringing in, then we can sort out what's going on. Now we have our point of control established. The emotional energy came from a thought. Is that thought helpful? Why did it make me feel that way? What energy have I picked up? Why did I pick up that energy? Who's is this? Maybe it's not even mine. If that's the case, whether I know whose it is or not, I have the ability to just release it and not analyze it. I don't have to pick it up. I don't have to take it on. I don't have to analyze it or heal it in some way. It's energetic junk. It's space junk! Remember, you're a magnet, so you're attracting everything, including other people's stuff. By learning to discern what's yours and what's not it enables you to narrow down what you actually need to pay attention to because the truth is you don't need to pay attention to anything that isn't yours. Until you become energetically aware, you spend a lot of time trying to heal space junk that you simply collected along the way because you weren't aware of what you were doing.

There are two reasons why we want to sort out what's what. The first is simple mental clarity. We want to understand what we're working with, where it came from, and why it's there. The second is so that we don't spend our time on things that aren't ours. We're not in the business of fixing other people's broken toasters. It's okay to fix your own toaster, but leave other people's toasters alone. You can't heal other people's stuff. You can save yourself a lot of work by recognizing it's not yours and putting it down.

The brain doesn't know the difference between what's yours and what's mine. It just knows the thought is there and it tells you about it. The brain isn't actually discerning anything. It's just happily picking up space junk. You are discerning for the mind. You are in control. You get to decide how much space junk you collect. You decide what to do with that thought once you have it. Now you can decide if you want more of that or not. If you don't like what your mind feeds you then you can either re-direct the mind or just shut it off.

Treat your mind the same way you would treat a television. If you don't like what's on the channel that's playing, what do you do? Do you watch it anyway? I hope not. You probably change the channel. If you can't find anything to watch, then what do you do? I hope you don't just put up with it and you actually turn off the television and go do something else. What if you treated your mind this way? You can. You just have to be aware of yourself. It's the fact that you just zone out that gets you into trouble. You zone out with the television and you zone out of your mind too. You live unconsciously and unintentionally. It's all that zoning out that causes the pain that you feel. You get stuck in energetic loops of pain because you keep attracting the same things over and over again.

Those patterns are a hint that something needs to change within yourself. You want to end the pattern by fixing the outside world but it doesn't work that way. You need to deal with your internal world first and then the outside world will begin to shift for you. What people don't often realize is that their internal world is energetic, not just emotional and mental.

Sometimes when I talk about selling things in my business, I talk about the energy behind selling those items. What do I mean by that? The energy is the emotional and mental energy you have behind what you're doing. There is what

you're outwardly doing, which in this case is selling the product or service, and then there is what you're thinking and feeling about the process of offering that product or service. Those thoughts and feelings are the energy behind your external action.

It doesn't matter what the external action is, if you're not lined up with it in terms of your thoughts and feelings, the external action is probably going to fall short of your expectations at best and fail entirely at worst. That's because your thoughts and feelings are playing a much larger role than we like to think they are. Those thoughts and feelings are energy and they are directly affecting your external actions whether you believe they are or not.

How do they affect what happens? Because they affect what you're telling yourself about what you're doing. Maybe you've created a new product to sell but you don't feel comfortable posting it on social media more than once or twice so you don't sell very many, if any. Maybe you're trying to write a book, but you keep distracting yourself from writing and you never get the book finished. Maybe you want to learn to paint so you go to the first class, think you did a horrible job, and never go back. These are all examples of what your thoughts and feelings are doing to your ability to be successful at anything you do or try.

If you're going to run a business, you need to be comfortable sharing what you make or offer. If you're going to write a book, you can't be scared of writing. If you want to attend a painting class, you can't be worried about what others are thinking. These things seem obvious, but if you look back at your life, how many times have you stopped yourself because of some thought or feeling you've had? How many times have you failed simply because you never allowed yourself to start?

Sometimes it's not quite as blatant as that. Sometimes we do that thing and we put it out there and we lose the momentum when nobody shows up. Sometimes we doubt ourselves a little bit and don't put as much energy into it as we wanted to. Sometimes that doubt creeps in there and we decide not to go to that painting class the second week. But then the second week turns into the third, fourth, and fifth, until eventually you just never go back. Little things creep in there in the background when we're not paying attention. It causes us to doubt ourselves or not show up quite as much as we want to.

Paying attention to the energy means paying attention to how you feel and what you think. The problem is, we push forward and we ignore that energy back there. We don't pay attention to how we feel and what we think. We instead just try to use the momentum of the work that we're doing to pull us forward. Sometimes that might be enough to get you over whatever the stumbling block is. When it's not, you need to find a different way around it so that you can be successful the way you intend to be.

Your energy, how you feel and what you think is an important part of your journey. It affects your choices. It affects your ability to be stable within yourself. The instability within yourself shows up in your actions or inactions. We have a tendency to block it out because we get told to push through it. If you want it go get it, just push yourself forward.

That was certainly my experience. I got taught to push through and ignore my feelings. I learned that the energy of masculine drive was more helpful than the dealing with how I felt or doing any of that inner work. Nobody around me did their inner work (or so I thought). Everything was ignored and never mentioned again. I remember when my grandmother (on my mom's side) died when I was around 8 years old, my mother never really mentioned it again. She went to the funeral and that was it. I never caught her being upset about it. She never displayed the grief she must have been feeling. She hid it and moved on with life. I learned those same skills. I can't say they were particularly healthy though. Emotions just weren't part of my world growing up. I was indirectly taught that emotions were bad and that they were meant to be hidden. Truly, the only exception to that was anger, which was on display constantly.

I was never taught to manage emotional energy. Yes, I did a bad job of it for years. I learned to push through emotions just as my parents did. I also saw that the other extreme of blasting emotional energy everywhere didn't work either. I saw that in the drama of my friends and other people around me that were far more open about how they felt, but that created an equal amount of dysfunction, just differently. There has to be a balance in there somewhere. It took a lot of years before I would find it. What is that balance?

Emotional awareness is how we find balance. It's this combination of allowing ourselves to feel what we feel, while at the same time being aware of what we're doing with our emotions. Are we throwing them at everybody? Are we pushing through them? Are we identifying with them and consequently rolling around in them for a long time? Are we just allowing them to flow and then releasing them? This awareness is what creates balance because once this is understood, the emotion flows freely for a short period of time, is released without any drama or story, and we're aware of our actions the whole way through. We can recognize that we don't need to throw it at anybody by acting out. If we need help, we can recognize it and have the ability to ask for it. That is what healthy emotion looks like.

Is that easy? No because most of us aren't taught this way. We don't learn to do this. We learn to process emotions through filters of existing pain and trauma, which tilts and shifts new pain in such a way that we end up taking it on as well. The old pain we've already identified with clogs the system. It makes it very difficult to process and release new pain. We just keep adding new pain to the energetic pile until it topples over. Usually that shows up as an emotional breakdown of some kind. I've had a number of those over the years. They aren't fun, but what they did do was allow me to make room for more.

Essentially I was cleaning out the cupboards of all the pain I had hoarded over a period of time. I would rip the doors off the cupboards and throw everything on the floor. It was from there that I would sort through it all. Instead of just learning to manage things as they happened, I would collect them all and process everything in a very dramatic fashion all at once. I don't recommend this way of doing things, but weirdly it sort of worked for a long time. It meant there was a lot of drama for short periods of time and then there would be a dramatic shift. The problem was that it was a loop. I would re-create the problems again just in a slightly different

way and the cycle would repeat. I don't recommend that way of living life or doing things. It's not even remotely healthy, but it served a purpose at the time. Honestly, it's probably one of the reasons I'm still here. It was a survival mechanism and it worked because I did in fact survive.

All of that is the long way of saying that it is important to manage your emotional energy because it affects how you respond or react to your life. But where do the emotions come from? Generally, they come from your thoughts whether you're conscious of those thoughts or not. All emotion is generated by the brain. Think about it for a minute. If your brain is all over the place, your emotions are too. The more anxiety and stress you create in your head the more you feel like crap. If you try to control your emotions without controlling the thinking, you quickly find yourself denying how you feel. That creates an unhealthy problem. Frankly, that was exactly how I did life for the longest time.

When you control your thinking, your emotional state calms down almost immediately, without you really doing anything to create that. The brain is no longer generating the wild emotions because the thoughts aren't there to do it. So, now you feel better with no real healing of past experiences required. That's not to say that getting a grip on your brain is easy though. It definitely takes some work, but it is possible. What you'll find as you work through that process, is that a lot of your thoughts and feelings are just habits.

You can think of a habit like an energetic addiction. You're so used to being in that chaotic energy, that you go seek it out all the time without really consciously thinking about it. You will naturally gravitate back to the energetic habits you've had, emotionally or mentally, because that's where you're most comfortable. Recognizing that the thoughts and feelings are just habits can make it easier to shut them down. You'll recognize there is nothing there to heal because you've done the work. So what you can do at that point is just put the brakes on and take control. There is nothing to heal so the habit can be squished instead of healed. You can still question the thoughts and feelings, but what you'll find is there isn't anything behind them. It's literally just a habit that needs to be broken. You'll be able to look for a better way to manage the trigger when it shows up and you'll slowly break the habit.

The hardest part here is actually recognizing the habit. A lot of people see this as something they need to heal. They don't yet realize they've done the work and there is nothing left to do. It causes frustration because they want to be done with it but keep getting dragged back in. It doesn't have to be like that if you can spot the difference between being stuck in the habit of the old trigger and still needing to heal the old trigger. How does learning that thoughts and feelings can be a habit change how you see your own healing process? Are there things that you know you've worked through that are still being triggered? Could they be habits?

The energy you put into questioning your experience, understanding yourself, and working through the fear is what helps you move forward. It's repetitive to keep saying that the way froward is to heal the patterns instead of the trauma, but that's the truth. It's the energetic truth and it's also the physical truth. The only way to do this is to become aware of yourself within the experience. When the energy of fear shows up, spend the time to figure out what you're afraid of. When the

energy of doubt shows up, spend the time to figure out what you're questioning. The answers you'll come up with will surprise you if you're willing to do the work.

Everything I thought I knew was wrong. That sounds sad doesn't it? But it's true. The way I'd been taught to live growing up caused pain. The way I'd learned to function in my life caused pain. When I became aware of all these spiritual principles and later the energy behind everything, I realized quickly that my herky jerky energy was stopping me. I wasn't sure of myself and I was carrying that energy. I was afraid of other people and I was carrying that energy. I was afraid of making my own choices and I carried that energy. By understanding that it was energetic as much as it was physical thought, I was able to then dig into why it was there and figure out what to do about it. It gave me a place to go.

Your energy matters. Becoming aware of yourself allows you to tune into that energy and shift it where you need to. Are you energy aware? Do you pay attention to it? Most importantly, have you learned to manage it? These are skills that we all need. It helps in the healing process and makes a difference to how you live your life now and in the future. Do yourself a favor and become energy aware. It's important.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Final Thoughts

You get to be okay. If there was one message that I could give you in this whole book it would be that. You're not meant to live in pain and be there eternally. Life isn't meant to be a torture chamber.

Most of the reason you're in pain today is not because of the things that happened before but because of what you do with it in your head now. You've identified with it. You're wearing it. You've become it. You're not allowing yourself to drop that identity because you're afraid of what's underneath there. All that's showing you is that you don't know who you are yet. You haven't figured it out. Right now your identity is pain. You haven't gotten beyond that.

I didn't have a hot clue who I was when I started this journey because my identity was based on who everybody else thought I was. Part of my journey was uncovering who I was by stripping away all the things I wasn't. Was I scared there wouldn't be anything left? Not really because I recognized that I wasn't authentic in any way. I wanted to find out who I was, I was genuinely curious about myself. That doesn't mean I didn't struggle with it though, because I did.

The way I worked through my identity crisis was through my work. I started writing. I started sharing. I worked out the kinks in my fear of sharing and being authentic. That was part of what stopped me from being who I was. It was through that process, that I began to understand who I was. Eventually, after lots of repetition and back and forth, and lots of attempts and failures, I finally got it. I finally understood who I was and what I wanted.

I am a writer and an author. This is the work that I do. That clarity didn't come right away. If you've followed my work for a while, you'll know I did everything under the sun except this for the longest time because I had the fear of stepping into my power, of being authentic, of being real, and of being me.

It's weird to think that you can be scared of just being who you are. But when you're so identified with the pain and you've buried who you are for so long, it does cause fear. It causes fear because suddenly the ego doesn't know who it is anymore. I've been wearing this pain for so long that I don't know anything different. That is what causes the fear.

The other big question everybody has is whether they will lose every relationship they have with other people. The truth is that no you won't lose everybody. We're not really evicting anybody anyway unless they are truly awful to us, there is no reason to do that. We simply learn to allow relationships to fall away if they need to. We stop trying to hold on. What we learn is that when we allow some relationships to fall away we replace them with others that are more in line with who we are at the time.

You don't end up alone by yourself in a cave. You don't end up a hermit. You don't end up miserable. You're creating a life you want. You're creating the person that you are under all the stuff you buried yourself in. That's a good thing. It causes fear only because you tell stories of all the bad things that are going to happen when you do it. Those stories aren't true. They cause you pain and they keep you stuck.

Once I figured out that I was a writer and my message cleared up and everything started to come into focus, the clarity came quick. I freed myself from all the excuses the mind had made up. I was no longer afraid. I had the power within myself so suddenly I wasn't fighting with my confidence or my sense of worthiness. I could simply move forward and be okay. The vision didn't really clear up until I had done the other work.

What I find is people want to put the success in their work ahead of the healing. If I can be successful in my career then healing is easier. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you have to heal first and you'll be successful second. That's a hard pill to swallow. I had to heal all the things to get to a place where my vision would clear up, I could figure out exactly what I was doing and what it looked like, and only then could I move forward.

Do you want to know the real truth? I clarified my vision of my work all the way through the writing of this book. It's only in the past few days that I've finally come up with a framework that makes sense that will be the basis of everything I write from now on. It gave me the excitement to finish this so that I could move on to the next thing. It gave me some of the missing pieces that I needed.

I actually started this book to clarify my work. Ultimately, I got that goal but not the way I had intended to. I had intended to figure it out through the organization of this book, but that wasn't what happened. The organization of this book isn't the framework that I came up with. This book became me just clarifying things I already knew while understanding and clarifying my vision of my work for the future.

Every piece of work that I do, whether it's just a blog or a full length book is for me to clarify myself and my work. This book achieved that goal so that even if nobody else reads this but me, I still got what I needed from it. What I want you to see is that I had to allow myself to go on the journey first. As long as I was arguing with it, I wasn't going to gain clarity, I wasn't going to figure it out. When I stopped arguing with it, that's when the clarity poured in.

Do the work first. Follow the breadcrumb that gets put in front of you. You have to go on that journey to get to where you want to go. I couldn't get to here before I did everything else. It all served a purpose. Honestly, I had to be able to

embody everything that I talked about. All the ideas required clarification not just for mental clarity, but because I had to be able to actually live them too. Being able to do what I talk about is really important. I always acknowledge the human side. I'll write blogs about the human side of the journey. When it doesn't work and when I'm not perfect, which is all the time, I'll own that and share it with you.

It's never about being perfect. It's about being real and doing the best you can. It's about allowing yourself to have the human experience while still acknowledging that you can do better than you did before. It's a process. It takes time. We're always in such a rush to get there, we never really allow ourselves to appreciate where we are.

As I finish up this book right now, I'm in so much awe of the journey writing this took me on. It's layered all through the book. You've watched it happen as you've read the book, unless you're reading the last chapter first. From here now, I can fully appreciate and accept the journey.

I admit, that this past year or so has not been nearly as difficult or hard as those first few years were. I've learned a ton, I'm not afraid of anything anymore, I'll double dog dare anybody to take a leap with me. I'm happy to just do it and see what happens. I'm fully accepting of everything that shows up because of it too. All those things are what make this journey so much easier now than it used to be.

I'll end with this. I get the journey because I've been on it. I want to help you get to where I am right now so that you can free yourself and feel better. If this book helps you in any way, shape, or form, tell me about it. Reach out to me. I want to hear about your journey, your experiences, and your life. It's still amazing to me that anybody reads anything I write. That feeling is something that I treasure every single time I publish a new piece, no matter how big or small it may be.

Love to every single one of you every day.

Della